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DETECTIVE STORIES

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FEATURE
DETECTIVE
STORY

LAUGHING
DEATH'S
TRAIL

by

Nels Leroy Jorgensen



MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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THE EDITOR.

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE!

Owing to conditions over which we have no control, we are reluctantly compelled to raise the price of this publication to 15c a copy, beginning with this issue. We are, however, giving you a larger and, if possible, a better magazine. In the near future we will endeavor, without any further increase in price, to again enlarge the "Mystery Magazine" by adding more stories of our usual high standard, by the best writers obtainable. We invite your suggestions and criticisms.

THE PUBLISHER.



Laughing Death's Trail

by

Nels Leroy Jorgensen

CHAPTER ONE

REDFERN'S shrewd, cheery features relaxed slowly in a smile of amusement. Jim was a reporter on the *Dispatch-Democrat*, and he "signed his own articles," which in newspaper parlance means that as a reporter he was a good journalist—in other words, that he had made a success of his profession by submerging it under his own individuality.

"If any one had told me a year back that you'd be a 'fatuous fiance' at this date I'd have laughed at 'em. And it is funny—to think of old Hal Deering placidly awaiting the call of the marriage bells."

"Placidly awaiting!" Hal Deering shrugged disgustedly. "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio—I wish everything was placid and I had nothing more intriguing to do than await Mendelssohn's call." He looked about at the sumptuous furnishings of the studio apart-

ment he shared with his friend, a studio that was gratefully silent now that he was on the verge of matrimony, for Hal had enjoyed many good times there under the guise of the art he had never mastered.

"You mean there's a hitch?"

"Not in that sense, only worries." Deering looked up: His features were boyishly regular and rather handsome, a trifle irresolute, but firm, too, with an innate stamp of character strength that had seeped at two different periods—once, in the red mud of Flanders's fields, and, again, when he came to know Marjory Hale, artists' model. "Did you know Marjory had been—well, acquainted with Kregg?"

"Franklin Kregg?" Redfern leaned forward with a trace of interest in his languid mien. "Not particularly. Being a model, naturally she has posed for him."

Hal shook his head.

"I don't mean that. She had an affair with him. Oh, it's all over now; it was,

even before I met her, but——” He hesitated uncertainly.

“I know,” Jim divined. “You mistrust Kregg. So do I. But if it’s over——”

“All but one thing. He has one or two letters she wrote to him while the thing was going on. Fool things, I suppose, but she wants them back. She’s gone there tonight to get them; he has promised to return the lot.”

“Well?”

“That’s all—that and Kregg. You know him, Jimmy—strength and might! ‘Might makes right’ is his life maxim, and while I have nothing in particular in mind, I hate to think of Marjory facing him in his studio alone.” Hal smiled, a wry little smile that was half apologetic, and looked down at his hands. “Marjory is so wonderful that I can’t conceive of any man’s giving her up without a fight.”

“Is that all that’s worrying you?”

“Yes.” Hal dropped back in his chair, his fingers feeling for the mark that a heavy ring had left on one of them. “I gave her the dragon ring last night, instead of an engagement ring. She wanted it.”

“I noticed it was gone. That’s a dangerous plaything, though, I’d say. There’s poison inside it, isn’t there?”

“A great deal. My governor gave it to me. He stole it from some Chinese temple or other in the irresponsible days of his youth.”

Redfern leaned back in the deep chair and lit a cigarette. His face was in the shadows, but Hal watched nervously the glow at the end of the tube. It was evident he was ill at ease.

“Funny thing Kregg never did anything but cheap illustrating, isn’t it? After the first masterpiece that made him famous he’s never done a worthwhile piece of work.”

Hal nodded eagerly, the suggestion seeming to loosen a perfect flood of withheld ideas.

“There are a lot of funny things about Kregg; his laugh, for one—when he spouts his brute philosophy about everything in the world waiting for the man without too much conscience, and strong enough to take it—makes me creepy at times. I feel

instinctively that anything helpless within his hands he would crush to insensate lifelessness—ruthlessly. And the most beautiful things—something about him makes me feel that he would be most merciless with those——”

“Tessier, the sculptor, for instance,” Redfern nodded. “Tessier and Georgia Gordon. They love each other madly, and yet Georgia——”

“She’s paying now, and yet the devil of it is, Tessier must pay, too. I admire the courage of him tremendously; he won’t give her up. And Kregg will keep her because she’s his property.”

“Unless——” Redfern dwelt moodily on the thought.

“Yes,” Hal responded after a moment. “And if he did, I shouldn’t blame Tess a bit. Kregg will go too far yet.” He was silent, as though frightened by his own utterances.

“I appreciate your ideas, but they’re morbid,” said Redfern. He crossed to the open casement, looking out over the low roofs of Greenwich Village at the stars and a velvet sky; the scented breath of summer was wafted in on a light breeze from somewhere off in the Jersey hills, untainted at this hour in the crucible of the metropolis. “It’s a wonderful night; let’s go out.”

“Eight-thirty,” said Hal, as he looked at his watch. “I am going out—alone.” He reached for his hat.

“Where?” Redfern demanded.

“To Kregg’s. I can’t help it, old man, I’m worried. Anyhow, I need the air.”

His friend grunted.

“Be careful,” was his admonishment.

Hal went out. In the cooler outdoors his brain cleared somewhat from the cobwebs of morbid introspection.

But on the way to Kregg’s studio his mind reverted persistently to the subject he and Redfern had just quitted. Georgia Gordon was a star in the “Broadway Revue,” made such by Kregg’s far-reaching influence. And when Kregg gave, he bought. She had been his sweetheart when Tessier, a sculptor who maintained a studio on the floor below the famous illustrator, with a courage and strength of mind far

surpassing the strength of his frail body, had met and loved her. And she returning it, the little world below Washington Square watched with sympathy and pity the helpless tragedy develop under their eyes.

Hal thought of Marjory. Yes, he could fight, and kill, for her. And he would if it ever were necessary. He jerked his head up suddenly when he realized that he might be called upon to redeem that promise to himself. And then he became aware that he was at the foot of the stone steps leading into the studio apartment where Kregg dwelt. The artist was on the third floor, Tessier's smaller workshop on the second. Conscious that his errand was fantastic, and therefore exceedingly conscious of his own presence in the place, Hal wanted to avoid the sculptor, but the latter's door opening on the landing was wide ajar, and as he stepped into the flow of light Tessier saw and hailed him.

"I want you to look at the new piece I'm working on," Tessier said, his pallid face alight with the enthusiasm born of genius. "Got a commission today for a fountain at Pelham—'The Ages of Man.'" Talking earnestly, he drew Hal inside, failing completely to note his guest's detachment. "I'm working on 'Disillusionment,' one of my 'Ages.'" He stopped before the table on which stood the small embryo and flung a thin hand toward his model on the dais.

Hal looked with a flash of interest from the piece to the model. 'Disillusionment!' Tessier had chosen the drifting nonentity of Greenwich Village and Chinatown for his original—Vendito, the wasted shell of a man who came and went among the studios, privileged, wordless, perfect type for Disillusionment, Despair, Age—or Journey's End. He smiled in praise of the work done, turning quickly from the stony eyes that could stare at one from out of gray sockets like lights from across the Styx.

"It is good, Tessier," he said earnestly. "If your other figures measure up to what this promises, it will really mean you have arrived."

"They will!" Tessier exclaimed. He altered his tone and addressed Hal as one who could understand by reason of a fel-

lowship. "It means so much, you know, Deering, to have some one waiting for that success."

"She's waiting, then?"

"She'll wait. She loves me," Tessier said simply.

"And Kregg?"

"Damn Kregg! When I have money I can face him to the death, if necessary. I'm not afraid, Hal; there are more potent weapons than strength of the flesh."

"Call on me, old fellow, if I can help," Hal nodded. "If money will do any good, you know I have a good deal more than is best for me," he laughed, at the door.

He went out, Tessier's confident laugh ringing in his ears, with a sensation as of Vendito's black eyes boring into his back like twin jets of flame. The hallway was ill-lighted, and he fumbled at Kregg's door. About to knock, he changed his mind. The door was open. He went in.

CHAPTER TWO

TESSIER turned again to his clay, the while his model dropped back quietly into place. He heard Hal reach the next landing, and then there was a moment of silence, broken by a harsh, half-strangled cry that in its fear was presage of everything terrible.

The sculptor dropped his tools and stared wide-eyed across the table at Vendito.

"You heard?" he demanded.

"Yes. That was Deering's voice. He's done it."

"What——?" Tessier hesitated; he had not been trained for quick decisions, and he wanted his fears confirmed by further sound. But there came none, for the seconds that followed seemed eternal minutes in the strained silence that ensued after that fierce cry.

"We'd better see what's happened," Vendito offered, strangely calm.

Tessier wondered at the man's calm, speculating curiously as to whether it were the effect of the opium the antiquated

model was reputed to indulge in. He shook his head and started for the door, Vendito following eagerly at his heels.

In the yellow light of the hallway inside Kregg's apartment the sculptor hesitated. Then Hal's voice from beyond came to his ears, through the beaded curtains before him that gave into the studio.

"That you, Tessier? Come in—quick, for God's sake! Kregg is—dead!"

Tessier timorously opened the curtains that hid the extravagantly luxurious studio. Kregg, in evening clothes, lay stretched on the floor, Hal on his knees beside the still form. There was no sign, in the first cursory glance, of shock or struggle, only—he raised his eyes to the spot, directly above the dead man, where had hung in solitary state Kregg's one and only masterpiece, "Cloud-Queen," the magnificent portrait of a woman's soul that had brought him fame and fortune at the San Francisco exhibit years before.

The portrait was gone from its place; it lay on the floor—but only what remained of it, for the colorful canvas was ripped and torn, hopelessly mutilated where some object had been smashed through it. All these things Tessier noted like a man in a daze; he was staring at Hal's face, whereon was stamped a frozen terror akin to his own. There was nothing visible in that moment to show that Kregg had met his death from other than natural causes, but every one in the room was certain he had been the victim of murder.

Hal looked up, his features drawn and seamed. There were many agencies through which Kregg might have met his fate—many, like Tessier and Georgia Gordon, to whom it would be a release that made life for them worth while.

Vendito broke the silence, staring blankly at the kneeling man: "He's been murdered. What do you know about it?"

Hal sprang to his feet in a sudden rage.

"You fool!" he cried. "Do you know what you're saying? Get out—get a policeman. He's quite dead."

When Vendito had obeyed they examined Kregg's face and discovered something previously overlooked. On the left cheek was

a curious scratch about an inch in length, that ended abruptly in a half-dried splotch of blood. In that mark, Hal reasoned, was the clue that led to Kregg's murderer. He shuddered and turned away, noting that Tessier's face was white as chalk, and that his eyes were staring madly at nothing.

Hal sat down, striving to gain a grip on himself. Kregg murdered—Marjory! Had she gotten her letters, or—

He stopped abruptly. If she hadn't, what was the inference? The thought was too awful; unless the mystery was soon solved all of them would be involved—Marjory, he, Tessier. They all had motives; he must hide Marjory's.

Vendito came in with a policeman. The latter announced:

"Everybody'll stay right here. I'll take charge until the Chief sends some one down. I've phoned for a doctor."

The doctor got there first, and while he was examining the still form another policeman and a detective came in. That was Hal's first glimpse of Detective Lieutenant Croogan. Redfern could have told him, had he been there, that Croogan was a star in his own firmament, and as far removed from the tailored-to-order man-hunter of the Broadway stage as the thoroughbred racing pony is from the draught-oxen. He had keen gray eyes in a lean, clean-shaven face, dressed like an actor, and was distinguished by quick, nervous movements that made him appear continually in action. And he generally was.

When the first examination was completed he faced the physician bluntly:

"Well, what do you make of it?"

"I'm not sure. There is no sign of a struggle, and except for the scar on the left cheek and one other thing, I'd say it was heart failure. But it happens that I examined Kregg a week ago for accident insurance, and found his heart in perfect condition. I can certify that no ailment can have developed in the meantime that could affect him fatally."

"Ah!" The gray eyes narrowed. "So—?"

"For that reason I submit that you can look for foul play. There's that picture on

the floor to start with; it's his one masterpiece. The blow on his cheek, whatever it was, could not have caused death of itself, unless——"

"Unless it injected some sort of poison," Croogan interpolated.

"That is highly probable, but the poison must have been virile and only an examination will prove it."

Hal started. Poison, and that mark! He knew of one object that could make the mark and poison, too, and that was the Oriental ring, the gift of his father. And he had given it to Marjory only the day before. He caught Croogan's restless eyes on his face and turned away. Marjory—impossible!

"But he didn't die from heart failure, and the force of the blow on the jaw didn't do the work alone?" pursued Croogan.

"Neither. I've left you little to work on, but only the coroner can judge of the rest," the physician announced, and shook his head.

"The coroner has been notified."

"That is all?"

"Yes, you may go. Thank you." The doctor went out. Croogan swept the little group with searching eyes. "Who discovered the body?" he demanded.

Hal stepped out. "I did."

"Just this way."

"Exactly. I touched nothing."

"At what time?"

Hal turned to Tessier. "Do you recollect what time it was when I was in your studio?"

"Quarter of nine," Tessier replied promptly.

"How do you remember?" Croogan shot out at him.

But Tessier was prepared. "Because my model here," indicating Vendito, "had just come in at eight-forty, and I noticed because he was ten minutes late."

"Then at eight-forty-five you entered this place. You found the body just as it is. And then?"

"I shouted. Tessier and Vendito came up."

"How long a time elapsed between the time this man left your studio and the mo-

ment you heard his shout?" the detective asked, as he turned on Tessier.

Tessier hesitated and looked to Vendito for help.

"About four minutes," the latter put in without hesitation.

"I should have said it was less than that," said Tessier dubiously.

"It must have been less," Hal spoke up.

At that Croogan's interest was further aroused. "What did you come here for?" he questioned.

"I was—looking for some one." Hal was conscious that in the halting words he was not producing the most favorable impression.

"For whom?"

"I decline to say." He dropped his eyes under Croogan's stare.

"Ah!" Again that interjection with bated breath. Hal raised his gaze to meet that of the detective boldly. "Do you realize that that little admission you have just made puts you under suspicion? If the coroner's jury finds that Kregg has been murdered—and I'm confident it will—you were here, according to a witness, alone, for three minutes at least, before you called for help. And you refuse to say why you came?"

"I understand," Hal replied very evenly.

The officer who had first entered with Vendito now appeared from outside, and he bore a heavy, beaten-gold ring, twisted into the shape of a coiled, laughing dragon, two rare diamonds for eyes. Hal recognized it as his own dragon ring, that he had last seen on Marjory Hale's finger, and he held his breath.

"Just found this on the pavement underneath the window, Lieutenant," the officer announced, handing it to Croogan. "Thought it might have some connection."

"Ah!" the detective whispered. Then he crossed with his quick, nervous stride to Kregg's side and bent down with the ring in his hand, examining the mark on the dead man's cheek. A moment of silence, while every one watched him tensely, and then again—"Ah!"

Hal shuddered with premonition. They must not learn that the ring had ever been

in Marjory's possession. That meant he must claim it, for Croogan would know, and he shut his eyes resolutely on a vision of what must inevitably follow acknowledgment of his ownership.

While these thoughts were racing madly through his whirling brain he glanced at the door, becoming conscious that some one had entered in the wake of the officer. Redfern stood there, and he, like the rest, was watching, fascinated, the moves of Detective Lieutenant Croogan. Redfern's eyes went from the ring to the mark on Gregg's face and then raised to meet Hal's eyes in a look of clear understanding.

Croogan got to his feet and looked around. He held up the dragon ring for all to see.

"This ring did the work," he said. "Does every one in this room deny the ownership of it?"

That was a new and unexpected way of couching it. Silence, Hal felt, meant the eventual implacement of guilt. He swallowed hard and found Croogan staring at him. He started to speak, but some one else had spoken.

Jim Redfern stepped forward.

"It's mine, Lieutenant Croogan."

The sleuth's eyes narrowed. "Hello, Redfern," he said, coolly. "Are you sure you know what you're talking about?"

"Absolutely. You know me, Croogan. I claim the ownership of that ring—and I can offer no explanations."

"I see." Croogan's eyes went from Redfern to Hal, then he nodded briefly. "I'm afraid I'll have to take you in charge, then. Franklin Gregg was murdered with this ring."

Hal listened to the exchange wonderingly. Yet he dared not speak now for fear of incriminating his friend, whom he knew for a man of infinite resources. Jim might have some plan in mind that his hasty words would ruin. So he lapsed into wondering silence, overcome with the swift press of happenings, not quite grasping all that had occurred in the last hour.

"Make yourselves comfortable," Croogan said. "We'll all stay right here until the coroner comes."

CHAPTER THREE

THE inquest, not completed until the late hours of the morning, revealed indisputably that Gregg had been killed by the injection of a virile poison through a wound on his left cheek. Redfern cheerfully went to jail as a formality and Hal home, determined to locate Marjory and confer with his friend at the earliest possible moment.

But at ten o'clock he presented himself to the warden with deep blue circles under his eyes and a face haggard and worn, demanding to see Redfern. It was against all precedent, but Croogan had left the suggestion that the demand be granted if presented. Redfern's cheery, early-morning smile faded before the expression on Hal's face.

"What's wrong now?" he wanted to know.

"Everything. Marjory has disappeared." Redfern whistled through his teeth.

"I suppose you've looked everywhere?"

"Every place I can think of. She didn't return to her rooming-house last night at all, and there is no trace of her this morning. It is as though the earth had opened and swallowed her. She had a sitting scheduled for nine today with Coltac and she didn't appear. What does it mean, Jim? I'll swear I'm about done up."

"Steady, old boy. I can't take everything in at once. Anything else?"

"You're dead right. I want to know why you——"

"Not so loud! You mean what I did last night. Couldn't you see?" Jim smiled. "I got worried and came over to see what you were doing. I saw that cop pick up the ring, and, going upstairs with him, learned something of what had happened. Then when Croogan put two and two together, after one look at you, I knew what to expect. It wouldn't have done, Hal. For you to claim ownership of that ring would have landed you in here, and while I'm enjoying myself kidding the warden and his safelites, what chance would you have had, cooped up, of getting at the bottom of the thing?"

"You old brick!" Hal exclaimed. "I didn't guess—I've been in too much of a whirl since the minute I discovered Kregg—but I might have. And now that Marjory is gone I'm going to accept your sacrifice. But it's dangerous—if we don't come through!"

"Don't worry about me," Redfern laughed. "You have plenty of troubles of your own to occupy you. Here, what the devil are you doing?"

Hal had begun to scribble hastily on the back of an envelope lying on the table. For answer he signed the notation and handed it to his friend. Redfern read:

"This is to certify that the dragon ring found in connection with the murder of Franklin Kregg is the property of the undersigned, and that James Redfern's acknowledgment of ownership was made in order to allow me the opportunity for clearing myself of implication in the affair."

"HAROLD DEERING."

"I don't need that," Redfern protested.

"You'll keep it, or I'll go straight to Croogan and tell him what I've written," Hal said firmly. "Suppose something should happen to me?"

"Very well," his friend acceded. "But you miss the big point. As a representative of the *Dispatch-Democrat* I'm going to have the inside on this story clear through to its final curtain."

"You deserve it. I'll never forget this as long as I live, old man." Hal sat down in a rickety wooden chair and bent his head. Jim's voice came to his ears, a touch of unaccustomed tenderness in it.

"Is it any more than that night at Neuve-Chappelle, when you went out and pulled me back before the tanks came? No, I guess I can stand it. You get going."

"But where am I to start, Jim?"

"There's one big thing that impresses me. The ring has a lot more to do with Kregg's murder than we realize. That you must work out for yourself, because you're the only one who knows. I'd say get in touch with your father and find out what he has

to suggest. The ring looks like a master-key to me."

"A key. But there's more to it than that."

Redfern agreed. "A great deal more, but not another blessed thing to work on, unless you take the destroyed canvas, and that road is absolutely closed. There are a lot of people who will profit or be gladdened by Kregg's death, yet it may be none of those. It may have been an accident; I'm not versed in Oriental theology, but Kregg may have run afoul of the power personified by that ring. In that case, the Oriental mind could conceive of nothing more fitting than that he should meet his fate through it; you know that much. There are a great many suggestions, but in the end our best bet lies with our old friend, the dragon."

"I agree with you. My governor's in 'Frisco just at present. I'll telephone him, and then I must get after Marjory." Hal stood up.

"When you've found Marjory, I'll lay my last nickel you'll have gone a long way toward the solution of this mess," was Redfern's parting injunction.

The telephone connection with San Francisco was a hard and lengthy one to make, and Hal fretted in the solitude of his apartment while he waited. The elder Deering was a merchant who had built up a great trade in rugs and rarities from the Orient, and in the course of his work had come into constant contact, and therefore sympathy, with the Oriental mind. There was little enough he might be able to suggest, but any clue to follow was better than this helpless waiting.

When the connection was finally made, however, it was a good one, and it transpired that Deering had read of the Kregg murder in the morning papers. So Hal went on to fill in the blanks left in the mystery so far as he knew them, of Marjory's disappearance and his fears.

Deering, senior, was silent for a moment; there came only the hum of the long wire, and then he said:

"Your friend Redfern was right, I believe. The ring may have a lot to do with the case. It is probable that Marjory, in possession of it, was spirited away by the

powers it represents, and I don't hesitate to say they are potent. It's your best clue, anyway. Go to Chinatown, Hal, and find Om Tang Soy. He keeps a rug shop and is my friend. You may tell him everything, without reservation. Is that clear? But first tell him you are my son. Say that I have sent you to him and ask that he help you. Understand?"

"Perfectly. Om Tang Soy, rug merchant. Is there anything else?"

"I think not. I know of Gregg; he came originally from San Francisco, and it was here he made that portrait which they say was ruined. I shall do a little sleuthing on my own account at this end. See if you can get the authorities to consent to a private hearing in a few days, but allow me a chance to return."

"Very well. Thanks, Governor. I'll wire you."

"All right. Good luck, boy, and don't fret. The old Governor's got a few tricks up his sleeve for any emergency. Good-by."

Hal hung up the receiver, smiling with a return of his old, superb confidence that had been so shaken in the last twelve hours. It was refreshing to talk with the Governor. Since childhood he had been wont to lean on the firm, rock-like strength of his parent, who could always find a way out of everything, and always the best way.

He turned and started. Croogan was framed in the doorway.

"Good-morning," the detective said. He dropped casually into a chair. "Mind if I sit in here a while?"

"N-no, not at all," Hal said, a trifle off his guard. He sat down and then smiled. "Anything I can do for you?"

"Nothing," said Croogan, in a friendly manner. He seemed merely to have dropped in for a quiet talk. "Any news?"

"My fiancée has disappeared—abducted, I believe."

"The devil!" Croogan sat up. "Deering, you haven't told me all you know."

"I'm sorry, but I don't feel justified—yet."

"I see. I suppose you know I could put you under arrest for that."

"I didn't know it," said Hal gravely, "but I don't doubt it. Are you going to?"

"Not yet. You're more useful free. Circumstances point to your complicity in this affair, but I have a habit of going on hunches. I don't think you're concerned, Deering, but it's only fair to tell you that unless we find who did it there's a bad case against you"—he paused—"you or Redfern."

"Why?"

"I know very well that Redfern is bluffing. You two were together in France. Well, I'm willing to let the little hypocrisy go on."

"You're very decent," Hal said.

"Or wise, perhaps," suggested Croogan, rising to go. "There will be a special hearing behind closed doors before Assistant District Attorney Mortimer on Thursday."

He went out. Hal picked up his own hat and gloves. Om Tang Soy—rug merchant—Chinatown.

CHAPTER FOUR

HAL immediately telegraphed his father of the date set for the private hearing. He had a strangely complete and unquestioning confidence in the companion of his boyhood and counselor of his youth.

The whole affair was such a hopeless muddle that he made no attempt to solve it in theory. Marjory's disappearance had tangled an already gnarled skein into a chaotic whirl. There was nowhere to look for her; consequently she must be searched for everywhere. And though there was nothing but his father's order, it was a relief to be bound for Om Tang Soy and the possibility of some sort of action.

Hal alighted from his cab at Chatham Square and plunged into Chinatown, a seething, silent whirl of yellow faces that swept past him on either side like a turbulent stream cleft by a rock. Pursuing inquiries, he found that Om Tang Soy was a personage of some note in his own world, and he was directed to a spot some blocks away.

He found it, a gorgeously ornate rug shop, its clean windows displaying the best wares of the trade, fronting boldly on the pavement in more Occidental than Eastern style, except for two huge pillars, grotesquely carved, flanking on either hand the low-arched doorway. It was cool inside after the suffocating heat of the crowded pavements, and gratefully gloomy after the scorching sunlight. Piles of heavy rugs, from Thibet, Turkestan, Shantung or Tartary, were spread out in the shadows of the interior. The shop inside was very narrow.

Out of the gloom came a figure in rustling silks, the portly figure of a Chinaman, robust, sleek and frank-looking, considering his race.

"I want to see Om Tang Soy," Hal said, very distinctly.

The yellow man bowed. In passable English he asked the visitor's name. Hal told him and watched his back disappear behind more rugs, and finally one beautiful Turkestan that curtained a passageway opening at the farther end of the shop. After a moment he returned. Om Tang Soy was the favored of his gods in the visit of this son of his friend. Smiling, he bade Hal accompany him.

They went through a long, dimly illuminated passageway, emerged in a little chamber that opened on a flight of steps, and ascended. Above the American found himself transformed from New York, its furore and congestion, into a gorgeous silk-and-jeweled apartment that was the China he had known in early youth. His guide disappeared unobtrusively.

A man clad in the flowing silks of a mandarin, with a small, delicately embroidered cap, sat upon a pile of cushions backed against a divan. He was a small man, with the regular, smooth features of the well-reared Oriental of the better class; his eyes were brown and searching, his hands delicate, but sinewy. He showed few traces of age beyond the network of fine lines about his eyes, yet he must have been more than fifty-five. It was Om Tang Soy, and he arose with a quick smile at Hal's entrance.

"Mr. Deering?" he said, his enunciation perfect. "Is it possible that I am honored

by a visit from the son of Stewart Deering?"

"Stewart Deering is my father," Hal said. "He has sent me to you." He found the Oriental had grasped his right hand and was pressing it warmly.

"Please sit down," Soy invited, indicating a low chair opposite his pile of cushions. "Believe me, my son, I am grateful to chance or destiny, or whatever it is, which has brought you here. And I shall be thrice grateful if Fate has so ordered it that I can be of service to you in anything."

"Father told me I could trust you implicitly," Hal said briefly. "I am not at all certain there is anything you can do, but if I have your permission I'll tell you the whole story, which is more than the police know, and possibly you may have some suggestion."

So he launched into an explanation of everything from the beginning, for he knew his father had not spoken lightly when he told him to trust Om Tang Soy. And it was easy for the Chinaman, with his quick perception, to see that Hal was chiefly obsessed with Marjory's disappearance, to the exclusion even of his own safety. He kept his narrow, keen eyes fixed on Hal all during the recital, and when the latter had finished took a pull from a long, thin cigarette and inhaled deeply. "That is all," Hal observed.

"And the police know nothing," Soy mused. "You must be careful in your coming and going, my son, for you may be sure they are watching you carefully. As you see, everything points to you—to the Occidental eye."

"Then you believe the Orient may be concerned in this?"

"Very much concerned," Soy agreed. He seemed to ponder, and Hal watched him eagerly.

"Have you ever wondered or thought to question the source of the friendship between your father and myself?" the Chinaman asked with apparent irrelevance.

"Never. I knew it must be great, for he practically told me to put my life in your hands," Hal said simply, "which I have done."

"I think I shall tell you briefly," Om Tang Soy decided. "It all has a bearing on things as they are—there is so little in life, when we come to analyze it, that is really attributable to chance. That dragon ring you wore—the murderer's tool—come from the finger of a strange god—the Dragon God of Laughing Death."

While the Oriental went on in his droning, yet somehow fascinating, melodious tones, Hal bent forward to catch his every word, for a romantic adventure such as in his youth he had dreamed of was unfolding to his ears.

"Before you were born," Om Tang Soy began, "I lived in San Francisco. I owned a shop there, quite similar to this one, except that it was not so prosperous. I was a good deal younger, of course, and naturally less of a philosopher, so that up to that time I had accepted the ways of my people without thought of questioning them. There was a shrine before which my father and my father's father and our ancestors had worshiped—the shrine of the Dragon God of Laughing Death. That god demands human sacrifices—babies—at each cycle of the year.

"I brought to my house a wife, and she had born unto me a son to gladden both our hearts and do honor to our ancestors. It so occurred that later my son was chosen, by virtue of a ritual it would be tedious to explain, as the sacrifice for that particular cycle to the god. Knowing only that the gods must be obeyed and their priests never questioned, I gave the child on the night of the Feast of the Dragons and saw him left before the altar where the offerings are placed. Before morning he would have disappeared without a trace.

"It is a strange story in the light of today's civilization and culture. I sat outside the temple and brooded in silence; already my ego had commenced to rebel against the consummate monstrosity of such practises. When all Chinatown had quieted, after the orgy of the Feast, I beheld a white man, disguised as an Oriental, slip silently into the temple, and I remember my chief emotion was of surprise at his temerity.

"He came out later bearing my son in his

arms. That man was your father, Hal Deering, and he had entered the temple, as a thief in the spirit of youth's adventure, to steal the ring from the bronze finger of Laughing Dragon. Knowing the custom of the sacrifice, which makes the disappearance of the child a mystery, he had stolen my boy, too."

Om Tang Soy hesitated, lost in memories of high adventure and his yesterdays; his features were suffused with a slow smile. He was smiling at the colossal ignorance of those yesterdays, out of the mire of which he had climbed—the ignorance of tradition which held his people an inferior race among men.

"I spoke to him," he went on at length, "and he talked to me for many hours there under the white lady-moon. And I learned many things, for I had a heart open to understand, among them that my religion was a hollow mask. I felt that the laugh on the face of the Dragon was a leer at my own folly and my people's. So your father took the babe and nurtured it in his own home, partly that it might be safe and partly to prove to me that Laughing Death had no real power, until I came here to New York, when he returned it to me.

"I have learned since that there are no gods, only—a God——" Om Tang Soy's voice trailed off.

Hal breathed deeply, his eyes shining. "And that was the night he got the ring?"

"Yes." The merchant brought himself back to the demands of the present. "The votaries of Laughing Death would keep on the trail of that ring; I haven't meant to deprecate their power, for it is great. I have often begged my friend to return it, but it ill suited his vanity to relinquish that which he had won in daring."

"Do you think, then," Hal pursued, "that some one may have been after the ring—that the pursuit in some way became entangled in the murder?"

"It is a clue, anyway. I would look for this girl who is to be your wife through the medium of those who worship Laughing Death. But you will be risking your life."

Hal brushed the last suggestion aside. "Tell me, what shall I do first?"

Om-Tang Soy clasped his hands and, when a servant appeared, spoke rapidly to him in Chinese. "I have sent for my son," he said. "He knows by heart the story I have just revealed to you. And he will find the temple here in the city, which is hidden; after that he will serve you so long as you need him—to the death."

Hal stood up. A Chinese boy had entered, slightly older than himself, cool and dignified in bearing, intelligent of countenance and boldly imperious of feature. The father introduced him:

"Hal Deering—my son, So Yang Soy."

Then he proceeded to outline the case to his heir.

"Thou, So Yang, must find for us the Temple of the Dragon God here in New York, and learn what there is to know of recent happenings there. Confer with thy friend, whom I know you will regard as a brother, even as I regard him as my son." He turned gravely to Hal. "I have given thee of my flesh, oh Hal, son of my life's friend; when thy work is done he will return again to his father."

CHAPTER FIVE

THE night passed, a sleepless night for Hal Deering, filled with jumbled nightmares, replete with destroyed pictures, laughing dragons and bland Chinamen.

So Yang Soy had told him to wait. The task of locating the mysterious Temple of the Laughing Dragon amid the black labyrinth of New York's Chinatown, where it must, of course, remain hidden because of its homicidal practices, was a difficult one even for a yellow man. And Hal could only do that—wait.

Waiting was the hardest of all tasks.

But as the next day wore on other and less worthy thoughts persisted in claiming a hold. His brain, tired with restless fears and chaotic phantasmagoria, seething at helpless inaction, dwelt upon another phase of Marjory's disappearance. Suppose she had—

He stopped, cursing fiercely at himself.

It was unworthy, he charged himself, even degrading to every tenet of his innate chivalry and pride of race, yet the ghostly insinuations would not be banished. At length he could no longer endure the solitude of his chambers, where every turn recollected to him a happy, reckless past that he alternately laughed at or was ashamed of, and he sought Redfern, for the sake of a confidant.

"Restless, hopeless inaction, Jim," he complained. "It's deadly—gives me the creeps. Only a couple more days to go and nothing accomplished. Governor must be on his way back."

"No word from Yang Soy?"

"None."

"Give me a cigarette. That's the one feature of this nice jail I can't subscribe to—the smoke prohibition. Thanks!"

Hal was silent, staring down abstractedly at his hands, the fingers of which he was twisting and intertwining nervously.

"You're a case of nerves," Redfern remarked. "But that's to be expected. Personally, my confidence is absolute—in you, your father and Croogan."

"You think the thing will come out in the end?"

"I know Croogan, Hal. He's sitting back and waiting for you, and Detective Croogan always has a pretty good idea of what he's doing. You may not realize it, but you're following the best clues."

"Uh! But Marjory— God, I'm sick with wondering about where she is and what may be happening to her." Hal got up and went to the grilled window, brooding out at the bright sunlight that to him seemed mockery. Redfern watched him speculatively.

"What else?" the latter ventured finally.

"The damndest imaginings." Redfern's eyes narrowed. "Sometimes I find myself thinking—how could she have disappeared so completely out of a New York street against her will?"

"I thought so." Redfern stood up and came to the window. He laid a paternal hand on his chum's shoulder. "Cut that out, old man; it won't ever do. Don't you see, the very completeness of her disap-

pearance points to a yellow race that can effect such things so efficiently? This is no time for you to waver in your faith. Great Scott, you're her man, her knight, her protector. But doubt? Never. Put those ideas away, Hal; I know where they come from and can make allowances for them, but you—if anything should happen to Marjory the recollection of them would haunt you for the rest of your days. In your own eyes you'd be a—mucker."

Hal swung about as though stung by some fierce blow across the face, his eyes blazing. But Redfern's steady, understanding gaze only met his own tranquilly. For a long moment they stood thus; then Hal looked away, his head drooping.

"I see, Jim," he said slowly. "Thanks! I think I'm cured of *that* now—for good. I—I guess I'll go. There may be news from Yang."

Redfern pressed his hand.

"Each time you leave here you may be entering the worst of dangers, old man. Keep the jolly old head held high in purpose—and good luck."

Outside Hal recognized that his step was firmer, his vision clearer, since the talk with Redfern. Good old Jim. He did one good in his quiet, bluntly sympathetic way, in his vast understanding.

In his apartment again, he found Croogan awaiting him. This time he smiled.

"Hello, Lieutenant. I know nothing, as usual. The news will have to come from you today."

"Have you been to see Redfern?"

"Yes." Hal sat down. "May I ask what angle of the case you're working on?"

"You may ask. It may be—the torn canvas."

"I'm glad to hear of the possibility. There are a good many roads, aren't there?"

"Yes. And you?"

"I'm searching for Miss Hale, naturally. It may lead me across the murder trail; it may not. I am simply following what is most vital to me."

"Surely." Croogan hesitated. "Today is Monday. If you have nothing to offer by Thursday what are you going to do about Redfern?"

"My reprieve will be ended on Thursday. I shall take my place," Hal answered gravely.

"I see. I expected it, but I hope you won't have to." At the door Croogan stopped and looked back. "By the way, Deering, if I can help you I'll give you my word that I'll do it in confidence so far as my position permits. Will you feel free to call on me?"

"Thank you, Croogan," Hal responded warmly. "I will."

When the detective was gone he sat for a moment lost in his thoughts. He had every tool at his hands; he *must* come through.

The brass knocker spoke. He went to the door. A Chinese lad placed a message in his hands and vanished down the convenient steps without a word.

Hal went inside and opened the paper. He read:

"Discovered. American girl's voice heard Saturday, but nothing more definite as yet. Tonight bad for action. Meet me eight o'clock tomorrow night in my father's shop. S."

CHAPTER SIX

RAIN, pelting down in blinding, driving sheets one moment and the next relaxing into a chilling drizzle—fog, billowing and rolling back upon its source in great waves.

The rug shop of Om Tang Soy was more difficult to find on such a night than it had been in the daytime, and it was not lighted, but Hal found it, and the door was unlocked. He started when Yang's face peered at him out of the darkness like a spectre. But Yang's perfect, college-bred English was reassuringly comfortable.

"I couldn't risk a light. Some one might have seen you come in."

"Is it as mysterious as all that?"

There was no immediate answer. Then, simply:

"You are in Chinatown."

"How do we stand?" asked Hal.

"I'll tell you briefly, and then we will go. I've spent most of this time looking for the temple and then pursuing inquiries about its doings of late. Only they who worship there are even supposed to know of its existence. The priest is one Shan K'poo, a dangerous fellow. But I learned that Laughing Death has no ring, so there remains little doubt they were after yours." So Yang Soy hesitated. "That is all, except for what I said in the note. I have learned that a white woman's voice was heard in the temple; there is an opium hole just above it."

"And what are we to do tonight?"

"We will go directly to Shan K'poo and talk. He speaks good English, and you may be able to do what you Americans seem to excell at—bluff him. You have a pistol?"

"An automatic."

"Good. Let us be gone."

They found themselves swallowed up, once outside, in a great wet cloud that shut out all perception of their surroundings. Hal reflected that the shroud might be favorable to their purpose. He was becoming infected by his atmosphere, where everything, no matter how simple, is a mystery, and nothing is what it seems.

After walking steadily ahead for five minutes, Yang led the way off the main thoroughfare and into a narrow alley. There was a broken board fence to bend under and negotiate, ash barrels to circumnavigate, refuse and nondescript poles or barriers to pass, through a maze of backyards and tenement alleyways, all amid the dense gray fog. Hal wondered at his companion's unerring sense of direction.

At last they halted, although Hal could see nothing but the black maw of a filthy doorway with nothing to differentiate it from scores of others that lined the narrow way. Yang Soy led the way up a flight of creaking stairs, at the head of which a yellow gaslight, turned low, showed a closed and forbidding-looking door with a round peephole in its surface. The Chinaman knocked, and after having been examined through the aperture, they were admitted

into a dark hallway. Poppy fumes came to their nostrils.

Hal followed in the darkness by grasping the coat of his guide. They came to a room lit by dull red lamps that reminded him for all the world of a photographer's dark-room. Here were men stretched out on bunks in tiers like those in the forecabin of a ship, three high and lining the four walls of the room, at the farther end of which was a door.

About to follow So Yang Soy out of the apartment, Hal paused and stared hard at a form occupying the lower of the three bunks adjoining the door. He bent down closer to assure himself that the dim illumination had not betrayed him. It had not.

Vendito, model for Tessier's "Disillusionment," lay stretched out there in the dull stupor of opium.

Hal heard the impatient click of Yang Soy's fingers from beyond, the warning that he must not stop or appear to notice anything, and he hurried along. He had seen enough, anyway. He tried to recollect what he knew of the model, but it was surprisingly little, since the thing that most distinguished Vendito, aside from his wasted features, was his utter, clam-like silence on all things.

The floor was sloping downward. Then they descended a long flight of stairs in darkness, broken only by an occasional yellow flicker of gaslight, the source of which was sometimes unseen—down and down, past myriad doors, all sinister and silent with each its tiny hole of vantage.

The air became damp. Hal knew instinctively that he was far below the street level, and he reflected on having heard that two-thirds of Chinatown was underground. No, he had read that.

Light ended suddenly. Yang Soy stopped abruptly at the far end of a long hallway that continued to slope gently, and Hal felt the rustling of a silk curtain before which they stood. A cord was pulled, a chime echoed somewhere, muffled in cavernous distance. There was another rustle—this time human—and then a dialogue in Chinese—So Yang Soy and a voice that came from behind the silks.

"Come," said Soy, and they entered into a little room that seemed to have no walls, only black silk draperies that met overhead like a desert tent, embroidered with queer, laughing dragons in gold and silver, stifling with incense. "Shan K'poo will come to us here," Yang Soy explained.

Hal looked about him curiously. There was a strange, grayish light in the place, suffusing everything into dull shadows, the source of which he could not determine. Piles of cushions substituted for furniture. The draperies parted. Shan K'poo emerged from somewhere, his extravagantly luxurious black silk gown blending in with the background so that only his yellow, shaven head appeared as though detached, unspeakably uncanny in the ghostly light.

Yang Soy bowed. Hal nodded stiffly. He was listening. Beyond, he guessed, was the temple proper, and he was more interested in the secrets of that place than in its votary.

"Oh, Shan K'poo," said So Yang Soy, "I bring Hal Deering to confer with you."

Shan K'poo blinked questioning, inscrutable eyes at the white man. This, reflected Hal, would be a hopeless case of blind man's buff unless he took it in hand.

"A white girl has disappeared, Shan K'poo," he said bluntly. "The police are certain she is here."

"You must be mistaken," was Shan K'poo's courteous, cut-to-order reply.

"Hardly," Hal drawled. "May I suggest that it might be to your interests not to conceal anything? If you will give her up to me now, unharmed, the thing will be dropped."

"You speak of things of which I have no understanding," the priest protested unmoved. "And as for your threats——" He stopped, the flicker of a savage smile flitting across his countenance.

Hal's eyes narrowed. He caught a look of warning from his companion, but he was in no mood for futile parley.

"You will give me no knowledge of her?" "I deny all knowledge of what you speak of."

Hal compressed his lips. He felt the dead silence around them pressing in. Sound in

this place must be considerably muffled, but then he would take the chance.

"Marjory!" he yelled.

The priest swore—in Chinese. He and So Yang Soy were startled abruptly out of their habitual phlegm by the suddenness of the cry breaking the dense silence. The curtains rustled ominously. Shan K'poo's hand crept into his big sleeve, and Hal was aware that a knife was there. But the ruse succeeded. Before any one had moved he had heard a half-strangled cry, muffled but true, in reply. Now he knew that his life was in danger. There was humanity moving about on every hand behind the silk draperies.

There came an impulse to bowl Shan K'poo over, draw the automatic and, dashing into the temple beyond, risk everything, but he overruled the folly. He satisfied himself by saying in a cold voice:

"Perhaps I failed to make her hear me, but you and I will know you have lied when I come with the police tomorrow." He turned to Yang Soy. "Come on."

They went out. Once in the darkness of the seemingly interminable stairs, his companion gripped Hal's arm peremptorily.

"This way," he hissed, and fell into an unseen opening in the wall. "Run—follow me." Breathless, they drew up a few minutes later after having negotiated many flights of stairs and narrow passageways, all in pitch darkness. "We're safe now."

"What do you mean?"

"Shan K'poo never intended we should get out alive after that threat you made. There were no less than twenty long knives awaiting us along the passage by which we entered."

Hal laughed nervously.

"Is all that ground—everything we went through to get to the temple—part of its jurisdiction?"

"All. It is all but a mask for the temple itself."

"That opium joint?"

"That, too."

Hal was silent, pondering. They had emerged into the wet night again on another street. He stopped.

"Yang Soy, did you hear an answer to my call?"

"Yes."

"Did you think I was crazy, telling him I'd be back tomorrow with the police?"

"I wondered."

"You were very kind not to judge. I'm going back now—alone."

So Yang Soy had no objections. Whatever Hal wished he could have. And Hal told him he wanted Chinese clothing.

"I will get you a change," decided So Yang Soy.

This he did, and when Hal had donned the garments over his own and the little skull cap in the darkness of a convenient doorway, he could have passed anywhere in the night for just what he purported to be.

"I would go with you," So Yang Soy said when they parted, "but I will be of more value to your mission alive and free."

CHAPTER SEVEN

FOR the second time that night Hal was inspected through the hole in the doorway that barred passage to the opium den. He passed and, head down, he went through, affecting the trace of a shuffle in his walk.

Vendito was still in his berth, a pipe hanging from his outstretched hand.

Beyond Hal went, into the labyrinth of passages that led to the Temple of the Dragon God. It was a difficult passage alone, and he knew that the chances for his ever emerging alive from this adventure were few indeed.

But he was cognizant of one fact that overshadowed all else. Now that he was aware of Marjory's prison no risk taken in an attempt to rescue her was too great. Yet he knew that he must preserve his own head for her sake.

That half-choked cry! He pictured a yellow hand clapped over that red mouth, another, perhaps, menacing her full white throat, her deep gray eyes wide with terror and agony. Would she think he had de-

serted her when she heard the sounds of his departure?

And where to look for her after he had made his way into the temple? Hal set his lips grimly, descending the long, narrow stairs silently on felt-shod feet. There were ways to make men talk—even Shan K'poo.

Every minute that separated him now from the girl he loved was agony. Unconsciously he hastened his steps. Then he stopped, his face had touched the silk curtains he remembered as before the portals of the temple. There was no other barrier, so he parted them and entered.

Inside all was dead silence, except for a voice as from afar off, muffled strangely by partitions and draperies, intoning a wailing Oriental love-ballad.

The song died away and still Hal stood listening. "Tiny Feet, where art thou strayed?" The languorous pain of it hung poised wraithlike on the scented air.

He jerked back his head. There was work that must be done—hard and dangerous work. Love came after.

Inside the canopied apartment where Shan K'poo had received him, Hal stood in silence listening. No sound; the draperies only rustled in a damp, underground zephyr; the subterranean chambers were still as the depths of the grave. Yet he knew that but one little cry was enough to waken them into ominously rustling life, pulsating, hidden menace.

He flung off his disguise, slowly parted the curtains and, perceiving the space beyond to be empty, he advanced. He stood in the temple. Here the light was blue—a pale blue, yet certain, that came from elaborately grilled lamps suspended from chains ending in shadows overhead, filling the chamber with a spectral gloom rather than illuminating it. The smell of incense was oppressive here; from the center of the room Hal looked and saw the two bronze bowls and their red coals from which the smoke spiraled upward.

And above them—he shuddered involuntarily in the first shock of perception—the Dragon God of Laughing Death. It was not a large figure, instead was about of normal human proportions, and the body

was that of a naked human, seated, two thin hands on its knees. But the head of the monster was the fantastic conception of a dragon, not laughing—but leering. Abruptly the slow words of Om Tang Soy came back to Hal, there in the vast, impenetrable silence of the shrine:

"I felt that the laugh on the face of the dragon was a leer at my own folly and my people's."

That was the impression it gave, there on its pedestal, surrounded by saving shadows that graciously hid some of its ugliness—of ghoulish mirth at the ignorance of its worshipers, of mirth now at the fool who had run his head between its slaving jaws.

Fear passed over Hal as he stood there—the cold fear that the best of men may experience at some period—and then it was gone. He set his jaw and returned the dragon's stare with grim ferocity.

"Old boy, you've got something of mine," he gritted between clenched teeth, "and you're meeting the man who's not afraid to take it. No, not one bit," he added, smiling at his own vanity.

Behind the god, Hal reflected, would be a likely sanctuary or prison. He started forward, bent on exploration, but something warned him. Some one was approaching. Looking about, he discovered no true hiding place, but it was a simple matter to roll himself flat under the silk curtains that walled the room. He chuckled, and waited.

The man entering was none less than Shan K'poo, and apparently with no suspicion of another presence in the place. Shan K'poo came to perform the sacerdotal duties of his office. He bowed three times to the floor as he approached the shrine and there he bestowed a small quantity of fuel in each of the incense bowls, mumbling in Chinese the while some droning incantation.

Hal was figuring quickly. Shan K'poo, upon the flash of the automatic his fingers were already fondling, was his prisoner. There were ways of making men talk; he had heard of them from returned comrades released from Boche prisons. He might try

the experiment with the old priest, but as he watched the latter's movements he suddenly conceived the conviction that such methods might not be necessary after all.

For Shan K'poo was approaching the rear of the image via a short flight of steps that gave onto a platform about the height of the god's shoulder, and as he watched Hal thrilled with rising hope. The priest pressed something in the apparently sheer blank wall that formed the deity's background and a sliding door opened. Watching, Hal heard Shan K'poo chuckle and saw him bend down. He did not need to be told that both the chuckle and the downward glance were directed at a prisoner, and that prisoner his sweetheart. And he restrained the impulse to spring out. He must be sure. Shan K'poo spoke:

"Your lover was here tonight, White Flower. You heard him? It is well, for it was the last time. He never saw the open air again."

"You lie!" It was Marjory's voice, clear and thrilling, and Hal's heart leaped.

"No," quite gravely. "He threatened me. He had to die. You may be sure you will not see him again. But some time, when these matters are all quieted, you shall go free. It is Shan K'poo who promises you, and no harm shall befall you."

"Why do you keep me here? Will you ever tell me?"

"You are dangerous free." That chuckle again. Shan K'poo stepped back as though to leave.

Now Hal knew that once that secret panel were closed he could not open it unaided without breaking it in, and he fancied it would be constructed well. So he decided it to be time for his cue, and, crouching, slid forward and up on the platform behind the figure.

Shan K'poo was smiling into the darkness when he felt the cold muzzle of a pistol pressed against the back of his neck and heard the words whispered in a fierce, low voice:

"One move or sound, Shan K'poo, and you're a dead man."

"Hal!" A stifled cry from the gloom beyond, as Marjory recognized her lover and

the need for silence almost simultaneously, and the next moment she was clinging to him, sobbing happily, while Shan K'poo faced about without a change of countenance.

"You have come back?" he observed, his voice casual.

"Very much," Hal agreed. "Are you ready now to listen to reason?"

"Do you expect to get out of this place alive, oh rash American?"

"I've gotten out once and in twice, and I'm still kicking along on all my cylinders," Hal remarked grimly. "You're not such a bad sort, K'poo; I guess there'll be no need to truss you up. Step inside there." He indicated Marjory's erstwhile prison.

Shan K'poo only swayed sidewise in the turning, but it was enough. In his hand he held a little stick, and as he stepped aside he struck with it on a great brass gong beside the opening. It all happened so suddenly—the sullen, penetrating boom of the brass—and Shan K'poo had disappeared, the panel sliding into place after him. There remained only his cynical chuckle and the dying reverberations of the gong hanging in the air.

"Now we're in for it," Hal said, as about them draperies commenced to rustle ominously with stirring life. "But even if I'm to die in the next minute, sweetheart, I'm going to kiss you first."

"Dear, dear Hal."

She was in his arms, their danger swept away in that brief space at the touch of each other, the swift hot pressure of their lips in lingering caress. He released her quickly. A knife had flashed in the half-light near the entrance.

"Behind me, Marjory."

She obeyed. She knew Hal's code: Women were not to share dangers with men, even if they loved them; they were to be protected.

Things moved, unseen. Out of parted silks a hand came, and a long kris shot from it to bury itself to the hilt in the paneling. Hal fired at the spot where the hand had shown and the message was answered by a cry of pain. He laughed grimly.

He felt for the extra clip of cartridges

and found them. Eighteen shots, then? He didn't care to think of the rest. He would sell his own life dearly, and Marjory must not fall into their hands again. He fired, as one yellow man, bolder than his fellows, essayed to creep toward them aided by the shadows. The advance was stopped.

Hal found it hard to realize, in the quick firing ensuing, that all this racket would never penetrate to the outside. Yet they were as cut off as though in the depths of the loneliest tomb.

Now the fight grew hotter; some one among their enemies was using a pistol, and Hal flattened himself on the platform, Marjory behind him and out of range. He silenced the weapon after a moment by firing at its flame with success.

But the one-sided battle could not last very long.

Suddenly he opened his eyes wide with astonishment and terror commingled. No, it was not to last for long. The draperies were closing in, slowly and inexorably, about the god's pedestal.

A cold sweat broke out all over him. Marjory had not yet seen. His mind reverted to when as a boy he had been deeply affected by the spectacle of the woods moving in "Macbeth." It was like that; the human agency known, but the sight uncanny, nevertheless.

There was no hope now; only a machine gun could stay that advance. He turned to Marjory for a last farewell ere he slipped in the second clip of cartridges.

"They've got us, Marjory. Let's say good-by. Then we'll show 'em how to go like white folks."

His voice was shaking and husky, but his hand was steady when it gripped hers, pressing it as white men do on the verge of death before a natural foe, turning slowly away with haunted, haggard eyes.

From behind him came a voice:

"Hal Deering—this way."

He turned. Another panel had opened in the rear of them and So Yang Soy's face appeared in the black aperture. Hal cried aloud in relief:

"In, Marjory—friends."

She obeyed without a word. He followed

her. Inside he became aware of a score of human beings crowded together. The panel slid back and a yell of baffled rage broke outside. So Yang Soy's voice was in his ear:

"Merely a rival tong. I've paid them. They'll fight to the death and no questions—glad enough to learn the secrets of this place."

And then Hal knew why Yang had taken so long to reconnoitre, was glad of the long hours he had waited for word. The Chinaman had done his task thoroughly.

Some heavy object smashed against the panel. The storm broke furiously.

"Follow me," cried Yang, and he led the way to the outdoors.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MARJORY was faint and used up, and when Yang Soy left them, promising to appear at his studio in the morning, Hal delivered her into the care of her boarding-house matron, a kind-hearted, motherly old soul, who received her with open arms and many homely endearments. Hal kissed her tenderly, bidding her think of nothing but sleep.

"Everything else can wait until morning," he said.

"But you will come for me in the morning?" She made him promise that he would.

He had considerable curiosity regarding the story Marjory would tell, but when morning came and she, sitting between him and Yang Soy, told them that she knew of nothing beyond her abduction, they were nonplussed, apparently no nearer the solution of the mystery than before.

"I got the letters from Mr. Kregg and went out," she explained. "I passed Vendito on the stairs between the second and third floors. I went home and was awakened at ten o'clock by a hand clapped over my mouth. There were Chinamen—three of them—in my room; they had entered, I found, by means of the fire-escape. They gagged me, hustled me out the way they had

come, and into a waiting automobile. I don't remember entering the temple—I think I must have fainted—but when they put me in that closet behind the dragon some one threw a pile of my clothes in after me." She found Hal's hand pressing hers tightly.

"What you must have gone through," he murmured gently, and she smiled up at him tenderly, saying with her wide eyes that it could easily be forgotten now she was with him again.

"And they gave you no inkling of why they had kidnaped you?" Yang Soy's unemotional voice broke an emotional silence.

"None. Shan K'poo kept saying only that I knew too much to be free."

Hal sat up quickly, suddenly inspired.

"There was only one thing she knew, Yang Soy, and that was that she had passed Vendito on the stairs. Kregg was murdered between the time she left his studio and the time Vendito reported to Tessier." He paused, and then continued quickly: "And Tessier said he was late."

"That's something," his yellow ally agreed.

"And I saw Vendito in that opium den we went through last night—asleep."

"That settles it." Yang Soy pondered, and then evolved: "We're coming to it. That den is an intrinsic part of the temple—a mask for it, in fact, as I told you. That means that Vendito is a member of the Laughing Dragon tong."

"And then," Hal interpolated spiritedly, "it means, too, that we can accuse him of the murder. Marjory saw him going up to Kregg's room—he knows he will have to explain that—communicates with his friends and has her abducted until the case is finished. Lord, how simple."

"But," Yang's voice broke in calmly, "simple as it is, it is yet a ragged piece of theory. We have the eternal question to answer and prove. Why?"

"Yes, why?" Hal sat back.

For a long time there was silence in the room, each of the three busy with individual speculations. It all seemed so simple, and yet intangibly a mystery. Why had Vendito murdered Kregg—assuming that he

had? Then there was the destroyed canvas to account for.

"There are one or two things to be done," Yang Soy was saying. "You tell me you can count on Croogan? Good. There is work for him. Tell him to arrest Vendito first. Then let us lead him into the temple to get Shan K'poo. My men were defeated last night."

"What are you going to do with K'poo?"

"We have—as you Americans say—overlooked a bet. Whatever concern the temple has in this affair, you may be sure the recovery of the dragon ring is at the bottom of it." Marjory started, but Yang continued: "It seemed highly probable that this Vendito was an opium-soaked outcast who was picked up for being useful in recovering it. Therefore, since the ring is their objective, it is their price. We must offer it to Shan K'poo in exchange for what he knows. He will not lie under a certain oath that I shall administer."

Hal started to speak, but Marjory said quickly:

"The ring. I have just remembered I was sitting for Mr. Kregg in the afternoon and left it on the table in his studio. I took it off because my hands, ringless, were an integral part of the picture he was making."

"It all connects," Hal nodded. "I'll tell Croogan." He went to the telephone. When he returned he addressed So Yang Soy. "Can you meet Croogan and his crowd at the Chinatown station this afternoon at four? They've gone after Vendito now, and if all goes well they will take Shan K'poo at that hour."

The Chinaman nodded and arose. The conference broke up. Hal and Marjory were lovers again, until the hour for further action should strike.

The day wore on. Croogan telephoned at noon that Vendito had been arrested in a studio where he was posing.

"I'll tell you what it's all about when you come tonight," Hal replied to his queries.

The abduction of the priest from his temple was consummated with fine precision by the Chinatown squad. Early in the evening Croogan and Yang Soy brought him into Hal's rooms.

"So we meet again, Shan K'poo?" Hal smiled.

"It is all as the gods will it. What is to be done with me?"

"Sit down," Hal suggested. "I have a little proposition to make, K'poo, but we'd better play with our cards on the table. You lied to me regarding Miss Hale; this time I shall tell you things and all you do is to tell me if they are true. Your friend Vendito is in jail. Tomorrow he will be charged with murder." He hesitated before he shot his bolt. "And then, Shan K'poo, who will go after the ring that was stolen from Laughing Death?"

The Oriental started, almost imperceptibly. Hal smiled.

"These things we know—that Vendito is your creature—that he murdered a man—that he was in pursuit of the ring for you. The ring is now in the law's hands, but when I have been exonerated of complicity in this crime it will come back to me. Otherwise it will stay with the law, and Shan K'poo, you and I know how many among your people will be willing to go after it then. If you can afford it, do not answer me. But, if I promise the ring will be returned to you, will you tell me all you know?"

"You can promise?"

"I can." K'poo looked to Croogan for further corroboration, and the latter nodded affirmatively.

The Chinaman drew a deep breath of resignation.

"I will tell all I know," said Shan K'poo.

Yang Soy administered the oath. "By the sacred honor of revered ancestors and the nine free fingers of Laughing Death, representing the Nine Commandments in the Book of the Law of the Dragon," Shan K'poo promised to tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

His story confirmed their surmises, and, as it progressed, Detective Lieutenant Croogan's eyes opened wider. He told one more fact than they had guessed. Vendito had been an artist somewhere back in a misty past, and that had been the reason for choosing him to follow the ring into the art

world of New York below Washington Square.

He had communicated with the temple on the night of the murder and told the priest to have the girl abducted. But Shan K'poo could not certify that Vendito had ever alluded to the crime or that he knew of any reason, beyond those stated, for believing he had committed it.

He was confined for the night on the technical charge of complicity in abduction, promising to repeat his testimony at the hearing on the morrow.

"It is little enough," was Croogan's parting summary, "but we may be able to trap Vendito into a confession on the strength of it. Good-night."

But Hal had small hope of trapping the imperturbable Vendito. That would be like trying to scare a rock into hysterics. Yang Soy he put up in his rooms for the night and started morosely for bed. Since he had entered the affair he wanted to see it through to a clean finish, to clear himself unquestionably by the indubitable implacement of guilt on the murderer.

"As Shan K'poo said," ventured So Yang Soy, "it is all with the gods—and their agents. Personally, I have a great faith in the man who saved me from the maw of Laughing Death."

CHAPTER NINE

DEERING arrived just after the investigation had commenced in the District Attorney's suite in the Municipal Building, speaking a few words to So Yang Soy, to whom he introduced himself, greeting quietly his son and Marjory. The latter was seated between Hal and Redfern, who was delivering himself of sanguine anticipations regarding the outcome. The elder man took a seat next the journalist, with whom he conversed in low tones while the Assistant District Attorney was speaking.

They were in a big, sun-lit room, almost square in its construction, and every one concerned or involved in the murder of

Franklin Kregg was there. Tessier and Georgia Gordon, soon to be married now, were sitting together in a far corner; So Yang Soy, blandly estranged by the door, watched every movement made; Shan K'poo, alone, too, and impressive; Vendito, sunk far down in an old armchair, sullen and alone, by the window. Croogan was standing in front of the flat-topped desk at which Prosecutor Mortimer sat, ready to sum up the case.

"You may begin, Lieutenant Croogan," Mortimer said quietly. He was a reserved, cold figure, impressive with a sense of much knowledge gained and retained.

Croogan summed up the murder and then launched into a piecing together of the evidence at hand, mostly circumstantial. Deering, senior, watched him in silence.

"At eight-thirty," Croogan was saying, "Miss Hale left Kregg's apartment. At that moment Vendito was supposed to be in Tessier's studio, on the second floor. At eight-thirty-one she passed Vendito on the stairs, between the second and third floors. At eight-forty Vendito appeared for work in Tessier's studio. Those are indisputable facts. I have presented, in theory, the reasons at hand for Vendito's being suspected of looking for the poison ring which killed Kregg. The ring was left on a table in the illustrator's studio by Miss Hale.

"Shan K'poo, priest of the temple and cult of which I spoke, will now corroborate my charges as to Vendito's standing with the temple crowd. At the conclusion of the corroborative testimony I shall ask that Vendito be charged with the murder of Franklin Kregg."

Shan K'poo was called, repeating in good faith just his testimony of the night before. Old Deering leaned forward like a bird of prey, his usually clear, shrewdly amused eyes narrowed and searching.

Piece by piece the evidence was built up under Croogan's skilful hands, until it was exhausted, while Vendito never once moved, only stared with his dull eyes straight ahead of him.

"You have no theory to explain the destroyed picture, Lieutenant Croogan?" Mortimer asked.

"None. I realize the case is incomplete at that point—unless we explain it by the theory that there was a scuffle and it was knocked from the wall."

"It is decidedly incomplete," the Assistant District Attorney contributed dryly.

Stewart Deering got to his feet.

"I believe I can finish the case, Mr. Mortimer," he said quietly. "Have I your permission to speak?"

"Most certainly." Croogan found a chair.

"To begin with," Deering said, "I took the facts concerning the destroyed masterpiece 'Cloud-Queen' and used them for my base, as I was in San Francisco, where everything began. I uncovered a strange story.

"Years ago two men lived together in Frisco, both of them artists and one married. One of them was Kregg. But his work was recognized to be inferior. His friend, on the other hand, whose wife was both young and beautiful, could really paint. It came to pass that he worked for a long time and hard on a picture for the San Francisco Academy—worked so hard that body and nerves were a shattered wreck—and the picture was a fantasy, for which his wife was his model." Deering paused. "You who have seen 'Cloud-Queen' have seen the result of that heartrending effort."

A suppressed groan from his audience answered him, but there was no other sound lest one word of his recital be missed.

"Meanwhile Kregg was making love to the artist's wife and succeeding. When the picture was done, on the eve of the Academy, Krugg saw his opportunity and took it. He offered his friend opium, and the tired body easily fell under the potent lure of the drug. After that Kregg, while his victim was in a stupor, had him shanghaied onto a vessel bound for Buenos Aires."

Deering halted, conscious of the tremendous drama in his story. He went on:

"Kregg exhibited the picture as his own and won fame, lulling the arising conscience of the wife for the time with his love-making and lies concerning her vanished husband. That was why he never tried after

that to paint a real masterpiece—he couldn't. A while later, when he was secure in the passage of time, he left the woman and came East.

"The man who was shanghaied was named Lansing—a name that has since been changed to the rather suggestive one of—Vendito."

There was a dead silence. Vendito never stirred, only his beads of eyes were fixed in a glassy stare at Deering's face.

"Is there any more to tell, Mr. Deering?" Mortimer suggested.

"Nothing more to tell. It is easy to piece out the rest of the story. Lansing returned, his wife gone—drifting along the opium tide into the hands of the Laughing Death power. I imagine he went to Kregg's studio after the ring, revealed himself, there alone, and Kregg taunted him with his helplessness—he was that sort, I gather—took down the picture, perhaps, and told him how no one would believe such a wreck could have done such a thing. Then—a blow. The ring, which Vendito—or Lansing—knew the power of—confusion—flight—" Deering's voice trailed off.

"Are you prepared to prove your story?" Mortimer asked, the voice of the inexorable law.

Deering turned to Vendito.

"Do you deny it?"

"Certainly." The colorless mouth opened on the syllable and closed.

There was a tense moment. Deering, conscious that all eyes were fixed on him, signed to So Yang Soy at the door. The Chinaman got to his feet and flung open the portal, quite unconscious of the dramatic nature of his task. A woman was there.

She was a frail woman, all in black, but showed in her haggard face the remnant of what once must have been a great beauty. Her eyes were the eyes of one who has been through all that life holds and back to its ceaseless mockery, but Hal recognized the eyes of the "Cloud-Queen." She looked with mute pleading at the man they had known as Vendito, and she did not utter a word.

Slowly the model's haggard eyes were raised to hers. He looked, he stared, his

eyes closed as though in unearthly travail, and then, opening them, he choked in a voice that was strangled by ferocity and suppressed love:

"Norma."

Outside Croogan came up to where Hal and Marjory stood with his father and Jim Redfern. He took Hal's hand.

"You see my hunches were right, Deering," he smiled.

"I've a lot to thank you for, Croogan," Hal laughed, "but you certainly knew your business." He hesitated. "Is there any hope for clemency for that poor devil Vendito in there?"

"All kinds. He'll enter a self-defense plea and get off clean on the sheer pity of his story."

Croogan went off with a little nod. Redfern looked guiltily at his watch.

"I must get down and write this story," he said. "This is the one time in my life when I scoop New York."

Deering, Sr., smiled, nodding meaningfully toward Hal and Marjory.

"I'm going along. I want to talk to you."

"Wait," Hal said earnestly. "There's one thing more. Marjory and I aren't going to run the risk of being separated again. We're going to be married today. Are you with me, Jim?"

"As usual, count me in."

"And you, Governor?"

"I'll be with you."

"As always—both of you."

When they had gone Hal turned to the girl, but they were not free yet. Shan K'poo stood before them waiting. Hal felt in his pocket and found the dragon ring Croogan had returned to him. The priest was awaiting his pay.

Hal dropped the ring into Shan K'poo's thin hand and it rested there, impressing him in its passive dullness with the retention of many dark secrets. He laughed, for looking at the thing now gave him an uncanny sensation; he could but think of the endless trouble that had pursued its wanderings. But Shan K'poo caught his eyes, divining his thought, and murmured from behind his impenetrable mask:

"Your gods or my gods—do you or I know which are the stronger? You are thinking that Laughing Death's Trail is all one of evil." His eyes strayed away, in through the open doorway to Tessier, who was bending happily above Georgia Gordon, and Hal smiled responsively in quick understanding. "Not all evil; nothing is that. It has helped to straighten out skeins which otherwise might have remained hopelessly tangled. Now it goes back to my god; who can say that it has not fulfilled its destiny?"

CAUGHT STEALING THE PAYROLL

JAMES REPONDO, 20 years old, left his job with the Hill Button Company, Long Island City, several weeks ago. Recently he returned. He walked through the spraying-room, in which a dozen men were working, and into the office of Max Cohen, head of the concern. On Cohen's desk were envelopes containing the wages of the workers—more than \$1,000 in all.

Repondo took the money, having threatened Cohen with his revolver, and departed. Cohen shouted and the men in the spraying-room grouped themselves in Repondo's path. He pointed the revolver, but didn't fire. Instead he lowered his head like a

bull and charged them, punching his way through.

Abraham Auerbach, foreman in the spraying-room, and all his men gave chase. One took the wheel of a motor car at the curb. Auerbach stood on the running board. Repondo, racing down the street, was soon overtaken. Auerbach leaped. He landed on Repondo's shoulders. The others piled on. They divested Repondo of his revolver and the payroll, turned their captive over to the police and went back to work.

Repondo was held without bail on charges of assault and robbery.

Behind the Door

By JOHN B. BELLINGER, JR.

"O H, dear, I do wish that tramp would keep away from here, John. He makes me frightfully nervous, hanging around our grounds in this way." Mrs. Mills gazed fearfully across the lawn. She agitated her ancient porch rocker vigorously, as though hoping that its penetrating squeak would warn the intruder away.

"Nonsense, it's only women and detectives who see a criminal in every bum that comes along." Her big husband grinned derisively. "I suppose if Tom Keenan were here he would be scenting a mystery, too. Forget it."

"Just the same, that man had better not show his face here when Mr. Keenan does arrive."

"That chap doesn't mean any harm; and Tom isn't coming on business, anyway. He wants a rest, so don't start bothering him with trifles." Mills was enjoying an exceptionally good Havana. He settled himself more comfortably in his hammock and proceeded with an airy wave of the hand: "That's the advantage of having been raised on a farm, the way I was. It teaches you that country life is the only one for peace and quiet. Now you take my word for it, and stop worrying or you'll spoil our whole vacation."

"All right, dear, you know best. I suppose I am foolish." Little Mrs. Mills smiled propitiatingly and went on with her knitting. She felt very small and insignificant in any argument with her extremely positive spouse.

Slowly the shadows of dusk crept over the landscape, shrouding it in a velvet mantle. Breaking in upon the continuous chirping of the crickets, a cow lowed faintly in

the valley; off in the distance a freight lumbered heavily through the gathering darkness.

Mills tossed away his cigar and, lulled by a gentle breeze, presently fell asleep. Finding it too dark to continue her work, Mrs. Mills rose softly and tiptoed into the house. Except for the sleeper's regular breathing, unbroken silence reigned.

Then a scream rang out—just one—a cry of mortal terror, awful in the intensity of feeling it conveyed.

John Mills was a light sleeper, and that fearful signal of distress pierced the very depth of his inner consciousness.

He leaped to his feet and made for the door.

"Ellen," he called, alarmed, "Ellen!" But his wife's voice did not reply—only the sighing of the wind through the trees.

A hasty survey of the living-room showed him nothing. Was she in the dining-room? No—and there was no one in the kitchen either. With a flashlight in his hand he took the steps two at a time. A lamp was burning in the bedroom, but he lost his sense of satisfaction before he even entered the doorway. The room was empty.

"Good Lord," he groaned, "where can she be—what has happened to her?" Mills was by no means a nervous man, but in spite of his scorn at her fears he really adored his pretty wife, and that awful cry had wrung his very heartstrings. He glanced down the hall.

In the back room was a linen closet, to which Mrs. Mills made occasional visits when in search of fresh linen. Perhaps she might be there.

The door stood ajar; but strangely enough it resisted all his efforts to open

it farther. Some soft, heavy object barred the way. Mills directed the beam of his flashlight into the opening. He gave a start of surprise. His wife, stretched motionless on the floor, lay upon her side, with her head toward the door. One arm was thrown across her face, as though she had attempted to ward off a blow. A few feet away lay a candle, evidently extinguished in falling to the floor.

He tore open her waist; placed his ear against her heart. It was beating. There was no marks about her face; her clothes had not been disarranged—apparently she had simply fainted.

But from what cause? She was in perfect health, and as far as he knew had never fainted in her life.

Taking her up in his arms, he carried her limp body into the bedroom and deposited it on the bed. For five minutes he tried smelling-salts and cold-water applications, but with no success. In desperation he resorted to the telephone for help.

Fortunately a doctor lived near by; within a few minutes he was bending over the patient.

"She's beginning to come to," he announced as a low moan escaped from her lips. "What was the trouble, Mr. Mills?"

"You've got me, doctor," said Mills, and he explained what had occurred.

A cry broke from the patient.

"Oh, those terrible eyes," she screamed, clawing at the air in deadly fear. "Those eyes—eyes—get them away from me. Oh, God!"

"What's the matter, dear?" Mills bent over his wife. "You're perfectly safe. No one is going to hurt you."

But her cries continued. In spite of their utmost efforts the two men were unable to soothe her. Finally the doctor reached into his bag.

"I'll have to give her a hypodermic," he explained, and he pushed the needle into her arm. In a few moments she lay quiet.

"What do you suppose could be the matter?" Mills inquired anxiously. "You don't believe her mind is deranged?"

"No, I think she'll be all right in a few days," replied the medical man, his hand on

the patient's pulse, "but she has evidently received a severe shock. You'll have to keep her in bed and away from any excitement." He picked up his bag, but paused a moment in the doorway. "Of course," he remarked, a queer expression on his face, "I don't take any stock in such things, but it's common gossip that this house is haunted."

"Haunted?" Mills smiled his disbelief. "What do you mean by that, doctor?"

"Simply this—this place was formerly occupied by a retired sea captain. He always kept pretty well to himself, and no one knew much about him; only that he had led a rather wild life in India and the South Seas. He was found dead in bed just a few days before you took the house—natural causes, according to the coroner, but people around here think he was murdered. The dead man's heirs were anxious to rent the place, so I guess you didn't hear much about it, did you?"

"No, I can't say that I did," Mills admitted candidly, "but it wouldn't have made any difference if I had. Like you, I'm not superstitious."

After the doctor had departed Mills stood for a minute in thought. His wife was inclined to be nervous, he knew; but she had never before been afflicted to such an extent. There must be some reason—some perfectly logical cause—which had not been apparent when he had entered the back room. He decided to investigate.

Returning to the room in question, he played his flashlight over the walls, the floor—even the ceiling—and minutely inspected every corner. He next went over the windows; but they were shut tight and, to judge by the stale air, had not been opened in some time. No clue there.

In one corner stood a ladder leading up through a trap-door into the attic. This sliding door had been pushed back to admit of easy entrance. It had been in this position when Mills first moved in the house, and had not been disturbed since. Nobody could enter by way of the garret, of that Mills was positive. But nevertheless he climbed the ladder and directed the beam of his light into the darkness above.

As far as he could see the great space, which ran the whole length of the house, was bare. The musty rafters frowned down upon him through their coatings of dust and cobwebs, as if in disapproval of one who had disturbed a sleep of many years. The stale air of the room below was intensified here, assailing the nostrils unpleasantly, and Mills experienced a distinct sense of relief when he had lowered himself into the room below.

Still, he conjectured, there was a bare chance that some intruder might have entered through the window, and had later been frightened away by the arrival of Mrs. Mills. Just to make certain he went outside and made a careful survey of the ground beneath the windows, but no indications of a ladder were revealed. Though the earth was soft from a recent rainfall, no footprint marred its surface. The incident was as much of a puzzle as ever.

He had started back to the house, debating the proposition from all angles, when suddenly his attention was arrested by a sound from behind him—some one had stumbled over the water-pot, which stood under the kitchen window. He swung his flashlight sharply in the direction from which the sound had come.

A man stood blinking in the glare, his expression betraying every evidence of guilt. The unprepossessing appearance of his scraggly, unkempt beard was increased by the pallor of his skin, unusual for a country district where the natives were bronzed by long exposure to the sun. His soiled shirt and tattered trousers were topped by an ancient straw hat from which the brim had been partially torn off. He was the tramp of whom Mrs. Mills had complained.

"What are you doing here?" Mills spoke sharply; he was not in an indulgent mood.

"I was just gettin' a drink from the pump," muttered the other protestingly. "Ain't nothin' wrong about that, is there?"

"Don't you lie to me!" Mills grasped the tramp firmly by the collar. "What were you doing in my house? Out with it?" He emphasized his remarks with a vigorous shake.

"Whatcha mean, in the house? I ain't

been any nearer than this here pump, that's straight—ouch! Leggo my collar, will yer?"

"I'll let go when you tell me the truth. Now, speak up, and be quick about it. Weren't you on the second floor some time ago?"

"Naw, boss, yer got me wrong. Why, I was just comin' up to the pump when yer slipped yer flash on me. Honest to God I was."

"Come along." Mills dragged his squirming captive into the house. "You'll have a chance to think things over a bit in jail. I've seen chaps of your complexion before. You've served time, or I miss my guess."

It took much patience and effort to arouse the village constable—even more to persuade him to come around so late at night for the prisoner.

"Why not lock him up in the house until mornin'?" was the official suggestion. But Mills did not propose to act as jailer, and the constable finally gave in and came.

Once rid of his prisoner, Mills decided to call it a day. Thoroughly exhausted from the strain he had undergone, he threw himself on the bed beside his slumbering wife and was soon oblivious to his surroundings.

But presently he sat up in bed with a jerk. Was he never to get any rest? Some one seemed to be trying to break into the living-room downstairs. A window creaked—a pause—and it creaked again. He reached for the automatic that lay on the table beside him, rose cautiously and stole down the stairs.

"Blast it!" The exclamation was forced from his lips when, just as he entered the room, he blundered into a chair. It fell to the floor with a crash.

A dark figure, its outlines clearly visible in the moonlight, disappeared without a sound. Mills let fly with his automatic, but missed. He rushed for the front door, threw it open and ran out upon the porch, flashing his light about. But there were no signs of the intruder; he had vanished completely. A thorough search of the grounds yielded no better results, so Mills returned disgustedly to the living-room.

"Confound it!" he exclaimed, flinging himself angrily into an armchair, "this business certainly has me guessing." He mopped his perspiring brow wearily. "I don't suppose there's any connection between these events, but, just the same, it looks rather strange to me."

The sun was streaming through the windows when Mills, who had fallen asleep in the chair, was awakened by a jovial bellow from outside.

"Hello, in there. Is the whole house asleep?"

An insistent pounding rattled the door.

"What are you trying to do here, Johnny? Shoot up the town?" Big Tom Keenan chuckled as his glance fell upon the automatic which still reposed upon the table.

He was chief of a famous detective bureau and a most unusual character. Fired with ambition, he had worked his way through college; then, fascinated by the detection of crime, he had joined the police force of a great metropolis. His good-humored countenance, coupled with an easy-going disposition, were deceptive, as many a criminal had discovered too late. Those jovial features could instantly harden; the cheery blue eyes, with equal dispatch, could assume a piercing intensity. He became a leader in his profession, the founder and active head of his own agency. In this capacity he had come into frequent contact with the law office in which Mills was a partner, and the two men became great friends.

"Sit down, Tom." Mills drew up a chair for his guest. "You came here for a rest, so I'm not going to put you to work. In fact, I think I can handle this affair all right myself." Mills disliked to acknowledge himself incapable of handling anything. "But I could use a bit of advice," he admitted, and he proceeded to review the events of the previous night.

Keenan waited until his host had finished, then he whistled softly.

"I don't want to throw cold water on your ability as a sleuth, John," he remarked with a barely perceptible grin, "but something about your story makes me think that

I'd better handle this matter for you. No," he continued as Mills opened his mouth to protest, "I'm only too glad to be able to help you; you've often done me a good turn. Now, let's get down to business. Is Mrs. Mills well enough to talk? No? Then show me over the house."

Mills did as he was requested.

"I doubt if any one could have been in that back room," remarked the detective when he had completed his inspection, "at the time Mrs. Mills went in. As I understand it, you found the door only slightly ajar and blocked from the inside by her body?"

"That's right."

"And there were no traces of any one having jumped from the window?"

"No."

"Is there anything of value in the house?"

"Only a little cash that I carry with me, and I have it all in my pocket now."

"And you have no real enemies?"

"None that I know of."

"All right." Keenan picked up his hat. "Do you suppose I'll find that prisoner of yours in the village lock-up?"

Mills grinned.

"If the jail is of the same caliber as my friend the constable, I rather doubt it," he replied. "However, you might try it."

"I'm sorry Mrs. Mills isn't in a condition to be interviewed," said the detective, starting for the door. "Her testimony would help a great deal. Still, we'll see what we can do. See you later, John."

It was evening when Keenan returned.

"How is Mrs. Mills?" he inquired as the two men drew up their chairs to the supper table. "Has she completely recovered from the shock?"

"No; to tell you the truth, Tom, I'm quite worried about her. When the doctor came in this morning she was babbling so incoherently that we couldn't make head or tail of what she was trying to say." He toyed gloomily with his fork. "As soon as she can be moved, I am going to take her to see a specialist. The doctor is afraid the shock, whatever it was, has temporarily af-

fecting her mind." He sighed. "Did you have any success?" he inquired, changing the subject.

"Can't tell yet," the detective replied briefly. "By the way, your prisoner is out of jail."

"What!" thundered Mills. "You don't mean to say he broke out."

"Not at all." Keenan helped himself to the butter with aggravating calmness. "I let him out."

"You let him out? Why, what are you talking about? Have you gone crazy?"

"No, I simply told the constable that I, as your lawyer, had advised you to drop the charge, and that you had agreed. A good cigar did the rest. The constable was rather suspicious—of the cigar, I mean—but after sniffing it carefully he put it in his vest pocket. Said he allowed it was good enough to keep till after supper."

"Look here, Tom"—Mills spoke angrily—"I think that's going a bit too far. After Mrs. Mills's recovery I expected to get enough evidence ultimately to land that hobo in the penitentiary. Now he'll clear out from this part of the country."

"Eat your asparagus and shut up," Keenan directed calmly. "I let that man out for a reason—a specific reason. He believes himself to be no longer under suspicion, but I can lay hands on him any time I want to."

The detective remained away from the house all the following day, but at two o'clock in the afternoon of the second day he returned bearing, to Mills's great astonishment, a cage containing several white mice.

"What's the idea?" inquired the lawyer curiously. "Going to start a zoo or a menagerie?"

"Neither," replied Keenan, entering the house. His expression was grim. "I'm going up to the attic for a while, and I want you to stand outside the door of the back room. Keep it closed until I tell you to open it and allow absolutely no one in the room. Is that clear?"

"Yes, of course it is." Mills was mystified. "But what are you going to do? Can't I be of help?"

"I'm going to try an experiment," replied Keenan as they mounted the stairs together. "And you can be of the most help by keeping that door closed."

The detective entered the back room, closing the door behind him, and Mills could hear him climbing the ladder that led to the attic. For a few moments the heavy tread of feet shook the ceiling—then dead silence.

This lasted for perhaps twenty minutes, when, without warning, the stillness was shattered by a deafening report, followed by two others in quick succession. Mills, unable to contain his excitement, opened the door he was guarding.

"What's the matter up there, Tom?" he called anxiously. "Are you all right?"

"Come up here."

Mills climbed the ladder and emerged breathlessly into the attic, to find the detective stooping over something on the floor.

The lawyer recoiled with horror as his astonished gaze fell upon a great mud-colored reptile five feet long. Its head shattered by a heavy-caliber bullet, the hideous serpent lay writhing sluggishly on the dusty boards.

"Great guns!" exclaimed Mills astounded. "No wonder Mrs. Mills was thrown in such a state. But what a strange-looking head. It reminds me of the pictures I have seen of a—a—no, it couldn't be."

"Exactly. You're looking at a cobra, the most venomous snake in existence."

"Good God!" Mills turned white.

"Yes," agreed the detective, reading his companion's thoughts, "your wife had a very narrow escape, John—that's a fact. If she had fallen toward the reptile instead of back against the door—" He paused, loath to finish the sentence. "But I imagine her scream frightened it away and it glided into one of the big cracks in the wall."

"Well," Mills inquired dazedly, "how did the beastly thing get into the house, or, for that matter, into this country at all? I've always understood that this kind of snake is found only in Asiatic countries."

"It was smuggled in from India and was placed in the house by design," replied the

detective, starting for the ladder. "But I'll have to use the telephone. I'll tell you the rest when I get back."

He left the room abruptly, but finally came back.

"Now," he continued upon his return, "I guess I'd better start my explanation with my visit to the village jail and tell you what happened. To begin with, that hobo you'd apprehended was about as talkative as the proverbial clam—wouldn't say a blessed thing. When I saw my line of attack was hopeless I changed my tactics and told him I realized we'd made a mistake—even apologized for having had him held. Then I requested his release and went off—as far as the street corner. When he came out a few minutes later he headed straight for a little cobbler's shop on a side street, and stayed there for about an hour. Then he went to the railroad station and came back carrying a box under his arm. I got busy, and after a few inquiries discovered that the shop was run by a Hindu."

"That tall fellow I sometimes see in the street with a turban on his head?" interrupted Mills. Even in his excitement he couldn't overlook the opportunity of getting a word in himself. "I've seen him in the village several times, and wondered how he happened to be there."

"This Hindu," continued Keenan, disregarding the interruption, "opened his shop only a few months ago, and no one in the village seemed to know much about him. At any rate I decided he'd bear a little investigation; so I waited until he had gone out and then let myself into his shop with a skeleton key."

"Where did the Hindu go?" demanded Mills, lighting a cigarette and inhaling deeply.

"He and his crony, the hobo, had gone off somewhere together. That gave me a fine opportunity to look over the premises. Back of the shop was a small room, evidently used for sleeping purposes, and into it I went. The first thing that attracted my attention was a strange-looking wooden box standing in a corner. The lid was pierced with holes, evidently to allow ventilation for some creature inside. It was fastened only

by a wooden pin, which secured a staple and hasp. I withdrew the pin and cautiously raised the lid. God! I slammed that top down so fast it raised dust all over the room. There was a cobra in the box—probably the mate of this one—and it lifted its devilish head as I looked in."

"Whew!" Mills drew out a handkerchief; perspiration was dripping from his brow. "What was that Hindu's idea, anyway? If he brought the snake to my house it must have been done to kill me."

"He had nothing against you," replied the detective. "As a matter of fact, all he wanted was to get hold of the snake I killed and take it back to India. The hobo was probably nothing but a paid helper. Well, to go back to my discovery. Further investigation of the bedroom disclosed another and smaller box—one that the hobo brought in. This turned out to be a container for white mice, which were undoubtedly used to feed the reptile. Nothing of further interest turned up, so not knowing when the Hindu and his companion might return I left the shop, locking the door behind me. At first my discovery of the snake didn't seem so strange, for I'd heard a lot about Hindu snake charmers, and thought perhaps the cobbler ran a little show as a side line. But as I walked along the street it suddenly occurred to me that I had heard some gossip about the old sea captain who used to live in this place. By inquiry I learned that he was constantly in fear of seeing or being seen by any East Indian. This gave me a hunch, and I got in touch with the State's attorney—hello, there's the telephone." Keenan hastened downstairs.

When he reappeared his features were wreathed in a smile of satisfaction.

"He has confessed."

"Who has confessed?" Mills was still befogged.

"The Hindu, of course," Keenan laughed. "I'll get to that in just a second. As I was saying, when I recalled this gossip about the captain I immediately got in touch with the State's attorney by phone, and as a result of our talk the captain's body was exhumed. Just above his ankle they discovered two tiny incisions, no bigger than

pin-pricks. He had evidently been bitten and killed in this house by a snake. In view of my investigation this evidence looked pretty bad for the Hindu, so, after a conference, it was decided that the sheriff would arrest him at once, as we inferred that he had put a cobra in this house. I agreed to try this experiment of trapping the snake with the mice and report results to the State's attorney. Evidently the snake I killed had finished off all the mice in the attic and was getting hungry, for he didn't waste much time in falling into the trap I set using the mice as bait. There's his hiding place." Keenan pointed to an opening in the wall where the boards had swelled and cracked.

"Why do you suppose that the Hindu remained here? I should think he would have left these parts as soon as the captain died."

"No," replied the detective, extracting a cigar from his pocket, "those East Indians are very superstitious; in certain parts of India the cobra is an object of worship."

"What was the row between him and the captain? Did you find out anything about that?"

"Yes, the Hindu was perfectly frank about it when he confessed. It appears that the captain desecrated an Indian temple, so the priests got together and decided he must pay the death penalty. Our friend the cobbler was elected for the dirty work. So he brought over a pair of cobras, let the female loose in the house, and it killed the captain. The reptile then hid in the wall and your wife saw it and fell in a faint. The Hindu had sent the hobo to recover the snake. That's why he was prowling around your house. What's the matter, man, you look rather down and out?"

Mills gulped and licked his dry lips.

"Oh, I'm all right," he replied with a feeble attempt at a smile. "But after seeing what might have happened, I've come to the conclusion that country life isn't what it used to be. I'm taking my wife back to the city tomorrow."

1,000 MEN BATTLED NEGRO

JOE PULLEN, negro tenant farmer in Drew, Miss., died from the effects of a score of machine-gun bullets after he had battled a posse of 1,000 men seven hours, killing three and wounding nine others, three of them fatally.

The fight ended at 1 a. m., after possemen had brought up a machine gun from Clarksdale, Miss., poured a withering fire into a drainage ditch where Pullen had entrenched himself, and four of them had braved his unerring fire to storm the negro's position.

Pullen was brought in and was left lying in the main street until he died.

The trouble started shortly after noon, when the negro shot and killed W. T. Sanders, 45 years old, on whose farm he lived, after an argument over a debt which Pullen

owed. The negro armed himself with a shotgun, in addition to his pistol, and fled into a swamp, three miles away.

One by one Pullen dropped his pursuers from ambush, and by the time he reached his last stand in the drainage ditch had accounted for eleven possemen. His twelfth victim fell while aiding in placing the machine gun.

In addition to Sanders, those killed by the fugitive were R. L. Methevin, 55 years old, and E. O. Hess, 50, possemen. The most seriously wounded are J. L. (Bud) Doggett, a lumberman of Clarksdale, shot near the heart; and A. L. Manning and Kenneth Blackwood, farmers, both shot in the face and neck. Doggett is said to have a chance for his life, but Manning and Blackwood are expected to die.

A Ring and a Riddle

By JAMES W. EGAN

CLEVELAND PRESTON, managing genius of the *Journal*, was enjoying a magazine of detective stories in his office. Preston had a weakness for mystery fiction and mysteries which were not fiction. Indeed, among Seapolis newspapermen he was hailed as the "problemist" because of the pleasure he derived from tackling tangles that baffled the local police.

And while the editorial director of the *Journal* was by no means infallible, there were numerous occasions on which he had proved his ability to solve really intricate problems. Honest police officials respected and admired him, for he had been of considerable help to them. Of course others, for reasons easily guessed, did not like him at all.

A buzzer sounded harshly at his elbow. Preston, already two jumps ahead of the author of the tale he was reading, dropped the magazine and picked up his desk phone.

"Oh, come on in, Al," he uttered a second later.

Al Murphy, the sporting editor, lost no time. Within a minute he was facing the head of the *Journal* in his sanctum.

"I have a favor I want to ask of you, Mr. Preston," he began.

"Hope it isn't a raise, Al," twinkled his boss.

"Not this time," grinned Murphy, and then more soberly, "a friend of mine is in trouble, Mr. Preston, and—it's a kind of a peculiar thing."

"Well, let's have it, Al." Preston's eyes sparkled behind his old-fashioned glasses.

"You may remember Herb Collier, who used to cover the county for the *Star*? He and I went to school together, and he's always been a pal of mine. I know he's all right, to begin with."

"He hasn't been working on the *Star* recently, has he?"

"No, he quit a year ago—had a crazy notion to go selling motor-car stock. That flivvered, and there wasn't any newspaper job open, so several months ago he grabbed off a job with Louie Schomer, the jeweler on Broadway. And now he's in a jam that involves the girl he hopes to marry as well as himself."

"Has he stolen anything, or——"

"No; but a five-thousand-dollar diamond ring entrusted to him has utterly vanished—disappeared while he and the girl were together, at that, without a trace. It's such an old affair. I got Herb and Miss Verrill—that's the girl—outside. Thought they ought to tell you their story, if you have time to listen."

"Of course I have, Al. No arrests yet, then?"

"That was hard work on my part. You know Louie Schomer is mixed up in baseball, and I have a drag with him. Grace Verrill is a nice little girl, and I'm sure Herb's all right. It would be a shame to have them jailed, but I suppose they will be if that stone fails to turn up. You see, Schomer informed the police, and Lieutenant Hanson from dick headquarters advised the hoosegow."

"Oh, Hanson is in it, too?" The newspaper problemist did not like this particular police official, and the feeling was known to be mutual.

"With both big feet—as far as possible," responded the sporting editor. "Shall I have Herb and Miss Verrill come in and tell you all they know about this mess?"

"Go to it. And let the city desk know I must not be disturbed."

A little later a young man of Al Murphy's age, whose face showed the effects of a strain, and a pretty girl, obviously nervous, were seated in front of Cleveland Preston.

They saw before them a pleasant-looking man of probably fifty years, with faint streaks of gray in his hair and eyes that were keenly alive behind his gold-rimmed glasses.

"Just begin at the beginning, Mr. Collier," Preston expressed. "Of course there is no need of telling an ex-newspaperman to be brief."

"I'll let you have the truth, Mr. Preston," Herbert Collier declared. "Grace can corroborate most of my story."

"Early this morning Mr. Schomer, my employer, went away on a short trip to Cascade City and expected to return some time after lunch. Before leaving, he told me that Trenwith Hatton, Jr., son of one of his wealthiest customers here in Seapolis, was coming in to select an engagement ring, and doubtless would pick out an expensive stone."

"Young Hatton, the chap who is to marry Virginia Carter Thorne, eh?" nodded the newspaper head. "The society editors have been all hopped up about it for weeks."

"The young man did come in," went on Collier, "and finally chose a beautiful blue-white diamond—a South African Jaeger stone, valued at a little under five thousand dollars. It sure was an exquisite piece of jewelry."

"After selecting the stone, Hatton informed me that his father was putting up the cash, and asked me if I could have some one run out to his home at Terrace View and show his dad the ring."

"He'll probably write out a check and you can have it left with him," he said to me. "Will that be O. K.?"

"I assured him it would, and made up my mind to go out to Terrace View myself."

"Therefore I ordered out our queer big bus and prepared to jazz out to the Hatton hacienda in style. That's what started the mess."

"Just a minute," interrupted Preston. "Your tone conveys that there was some-

thing special about this bus you speak of. What is it that was queer?"

"Well, you see," explained Collier, "when Louie Schomer bought out Sam Kauffman two years ago, he likewise inherited a big closed car—a Serviss sedan—and a Jap chauffeur. It seemed Kauffman kept the machine and driver solely for show, to impress fashionable customers. Louie Schomer himself believed it good stuff, and several times I have had Ito, the Jap, drive me out to wealthy customers in the big hack."

"It was necessary for us to pick our way through the downtown traffic, and that is how I got Grace mixed up in this affair. Confound the luck!" Collier snapped it out savagely.

"Never mind, Herbert; we haven't done anything wrong," averred the girl, her large brown eyes damp.

"On a street corner I happened to glimpse Grace," resumed the young man. "I thought it would be nice to bring her along for the ride to Terrace View, although not strictly businesslike, so I had Ito stop the sedan and persuaded her to accompany me."

"I had nothing much to do, and it is such a beautiful car to ride in," added Grace Verrill. Preston smiled.

"Old John J. Jinx must have been hanging around, for it wasn't ten minutes later everything had happened," Collier asserted bitterly.

"As we hummed out Broadway and prepared to turn into Tunnel street I told Grace where I was going and mentioned the five-thousand-dollar stone I had with me for Trenwith Hatton, Jr."

"And I begged him to let me look at it, and Herbert did," remarked the girl. "It was such a wonderful diamond—a stone any girl would love to wear."

The managing editor of the *Journal* shot her a sudden, sharp glance, but did not speak.

"Grace was holding the box with the ring in it when we entered Tunnel street," Collier continued, "and I thought it was darker and gloomier than usual."

"Tunnel street?" uttered Preston. "It is the thoroughfare that runs through the side

of a hill for more than a block, isn't it? Very poorly lighted. I've written editorials on it."

"Under the circumstances," the young man confessed, "I couldn't help—that is—well, I stole a kiss."

"And all of a sudden the lights went out and we stopped with a hard bump," chimed in Grace Verrill, blushes suffusing her pretty cheeks. "The box with the stone seemed to be jarred out of my hand, and——"

"We've never seen it since," said Herbert Collier. "A five-thousand-dollar diamond disappeared as if by magic."

"You say the lights in the tunnel went off and there was a bump?" Preston queried. "What kind of a bump? How long were the lights off?"

"The bump was caused by another car colliding with us when the lights went out. A big machine that was just behind us," stated Collier. "The lights weren't off more than a minute, and as neither machine was hurt to speak of, the automobile behind us drove on without my even getting the number. You see, I didn't know then the diamond was gone. Besides, I don't see how any one in that car could have taken it unless he was almighty quick."

"Any windows down in the sedan?"

"Yes; two. But how would any one know the lights were going to go off, or that I carried such a precious stone?"

"Not unless—however, go on with your story. You discovered the loss of the diamond—when?"

"As soon as the lights came back and Ito took a look at the car I recalled the stone. I asked Grace where it was. She said it had fallen from her hand."

"Believe me, I searched the floor of the car, every inch of the seat, and even the paving underneath the machine, though the doors had not been opened until after the lights were restored."

"Both of us looked until our eyes ached. Ito looked, too. We grubbed frantically all about the sedan. For a moment I even suspected Grace, I'm ashamed to say, because she had been so delighted with the ring, and it had been in her hands."

"It dropped, just as I told you," the girl voiced tearfully.

"Of course, dear. But it seems so uncanny, the way it vanished—just as if the accursed thing had dissolved into nothingness."

"What about Ito, the Jap?" demanded Preston. "Any suspicion of him?"

"No. I don't see how he could have made away with it." Collier shook his head. "All I know of Ito is that he drove for Sam Kauffman, and came to Schomer's when he left his former boss. He is very quiet and stoical. He seemed astonished to think I had lost anything, but hunted willingly enough. I watched him closely, and detected nothing wrong."

"If Ito was clever enough to pull anything you wouldn't notice after the lights went on," commented Preston.

"Besides, he was searched by that horrid policeman who was so mean to us," stated Grace Verrill.

"Lieutenant Hanson, from detective headquarters, I presume?"

"Yes; he was called in," the young man responded. "I wanted Grace to get out of it, but she couldn't very well do so, on account of Ito. Therefore we both went back to the store and I reported the loss to Hilden, in charge during Mr. Schomer's absence. He located the boss, and as soon as Louie got the long-distance call he sped back to Seapolis."

"Naturally, there was an explosion. Schomer had the stone insured—all jewelers insure valuables like that—but he seemed to think our story preposterous. He called this officer, Hanson—a friend of his—and right off the bat Hanson wanted to clap us in jail. We asked to be searched, and of course nothing was found on us. But he said that proved nothing, and looked over the sedan very carefully. Only Al Murphy here saved us from the humiliation of jail. If the diamond doesn't show up I suppose we'll be the goats, anyhow."

"An odd affair," mused Cleveland Preston. "This is all you know about the matter?"

"We have told you the strict truth, Mr. Preston," Herbert Collier declared. "May-

be it does sound ridiculous to you—but that diamond just vanished."

"Well, I hope I can help you," said the problemist. "It is a teasing riddle as you've related it."

When the managing editor of the *Journal* and his sport writer were alone together some time afterwards, Murphy spoke up:

"What do you think, chief?"

"One could conjecture up a host of explanations—none of which might be any good. Naturally, we are assuming your friend and his sweetheart to be innocent."

"I'm sure they are," the sporting editor uttered stoutly. "I believe this Jap knows a thing or two."

"You may be right, Al. Seems to me that Sam Kauffman, the fellow who sold out to Louie Schomer, figured in a jewel robbery several years back. I must get the boy to bring me the old files. And now you'd better clear out, Al. I've got some hard thinking to do if I'm to solve this puzzle."

But as Murphy took his leave the eagerness in Preston's eyes told him the boss was immersed in a problem after his own heart.

It was not until early in the afternoon of the next day that Al Murphy saw his managing editor again.

"I want you to get your friend Collier and Miss Verrill down here. Also Louie Schomer, if possible, and—last, but not least—Lieutenant Hanson."

When the boss spoke in this fashion he had something up his cuff. Chuckling, the sporting editor got busy on the wire and in less than an hour the four persons Cleveland Preston had asked for were in his sanctum. Herbert Collier and Grace Verrill were anxious and curious, Louie Schomer a bit fidgety, and the police officer frankly hostile.

"Now that we are all assembled," smiled the problemist, "I believe I have something to show you."

With a touch of the theatrical Preston loved he abruptly produced a little box, snapped it open, and exposed a gorgeously blazing ring to their amazed gaze.

"Is this the diamond that seemed to have dissolved into thin air?"

"That's the stone," gulped Collier. "How did you recover it?"

"You grant it's the missing gem, then?"

"Oh, sure; that's it," averred Louie Schomer.

The problemist appeared to be enjoying himself. He fairly beamed at the scowling Lieutenant Hanson.

"This problem was very simple—once I got the key. I'll try to tell you just what happened."

"Last night, after thinking over the affair, I decided that a thief, working from the outside during that minute the lights were off, would have to possess the agility of Fairbanks, the speed of light and the intuition of a good ouija-board. The momentary cessation of the city lights and the bumping by another car struck me as purely accidental factors."

"I went into the matter assuming Miss Verrill and Collier's stories were true, but I did not fail to check up a bit. What I learned convinced me they are on the level."

"There was Ito, the Jap, then. I confess I suspected a plot in which he played a leading rôle at first. However, I was soon forced to dismiss that idea."

"Apparently, then, the stone had vanished through no human agency. Unless the disappearance could be credited to black art the theory that the ring was still in the car was tenable. Yet all the searches seemed to prove that it could not be."

"Though I suppose it was all the time, huh?" sneered the detective from headquarters. "And I searched that crock myself."

"Nevertheless, I found the ring—in the sedan."

"Impossible," cried Collier.

"Not really, Mr. Preston?" escaped from Grace Verrill.

"What kind of monkey-business is this, hey?" Louie Schomer, the jeweler, showed bewilderment.

A sneering remark died on Lieutenant Hanson's lips. He suddenly recalled Preston had recovered the ring. He must know what he was talking about.

"From the moment I heard of the disappearance I had a vague hunch the diamond must be in the sedan," pursued the

problemist. "I recalled the machine once had been the property of Sam Kauffman, who is now in California, and it seemed to me Sam once had figured as the victim of a big jewel robbery."

"I heard about that myself," nodded Louie Schomer.

"Looking up the files, I found that a couple of crooks, evidently familiar with Kauffman's use of the sedan in calling upon fashionable customers, had held him up and taken a very valuable necklace.

"Notwithstanding this; it appeared that Sam had continued to use his closed car, and never was bothered again. I wondered at that. A pretty shrewd old chap, Kauffman.

"I became obsessed with the idea I wanted to study that car myself. I got my friend, Officer Oakes, who is quite a mechanical genius, to accompany me. We both gave that sedan the once over."

"So that's what Oakes was up to?" muttered Hanson.

"And between us," continued Cleveland Preston, "we solved the secret of the sedan. Following that costly robbery Kauffman had a hiding place built in his automobile. It's a little pocket in the floor of the car, very cleverly concealed. There's a sliding panel controlled by a spring which you operate from near one of the windows. Evidently Sam did not mention this when he sold you the car, Mr. Schomer."

"He did not," expressed the jeweler.

"The whole thing was sheer accident.

Somehow Collier hit the device controlling that panel in the floor just at the time the bump came. Miss Verrill dropped the box holding the ring, I conjecture, and by the merest chance it bounded into the opened pocket. The panel slid back into place—and the stone was gone. The pressure on the spring remained just long enough to permit this unusual thing to take place. In no car but Sam Kauffman's sedan would it have happened, of course. There! I believe it is all told."

While Herbert Collier and the girl he hoped to marry some day were attempting to express their gratitude to the head of the *Journal*, Lieutenant Hanson grumpily departed.

"I love to rub it in on him," Preston chuckled. "Well, Mr. Schomer, you have your stone. What are you going to do to the young man?"

"I ain't going to do anything, Mr. Preston. I guess he can come back to work if he wants to."

"By the way, Herb," observed Al Murphy, "Gaines on the city desk says he has a job open. Perhaps——"

Louie Schomer departed without his clerk, for with a chance to return to the old love confronting him, Collier admitted he was pretty well fed up with the jewelry business.

"The *Journal* will be glad to have you, my boy," said Preston. Then, with mischief: "And I hope the next time you show this charming young lady a ring of that sort she'll be able to keep it."

A \$50,000 HAUL

A \$50,000 fur robbery was discovered when detectives of the East Fifty-first street station admitted they are looking for thieves who broke into the fur establishment of Leopold Haas, Inc., New York.

It is believed they are the same men who recently stole \$50,000 worth of furs from Jackman's and a similar amount from Hickson's.

The loot consisted of fifteen coats of

caracul, mink and broadtail taken from the workroom in the rear. Other furs of great value were overlooked in the front of the shop.

Entrance was made through a building on Forty-ninth street and through the rear window of Haas's. The thieves worked fast. The shop is equipped with a burglar alarm, which sounded, but the men had fled when police arrived.

Wang Foo's Right Eye

By CARL GARRET HODGES

THE telephone on police headquarters desk rang sharply. Desk Captain Boyle pulled it down lazily and put it to his ear. "P'lice Headquarters. What? Number 32? The devil you say! When? All right. I'll send Lannigan."

motioned toward a group of detectives

He hung the receiver on its hook and lounging on a bench near the wall. One of the men rose and approached the desk.

"Do you want me? I heard you talking to 32."

Boyle chuckled.

"Yes, I want you. Somebody's croaked a Chink over on 32's beat. Better go over and take a look. Chinks are your specialty."

Lannigan grinned.

"I don't stick up for the yellow devils, but I don't believe in sticking a dagger into anybody. Knifed, wasn't he?"

"I believe so," Boyle nodded.

Officer 32, named Ryan, was waiting by his call-box when Lannigan walked up. He got down to business at once.

"Where'd it happen? Where's the Chink? Any evidence?"

Ryan gave the details.

"Over in front of Wang Foo's laundry. Knifed in the back. Dr. Haxell is the only one who saw anything."

By this time Detectives Lannigan and Ryan had arrived on the scene of the crime. A crowd had gathered on the sidewalk and were kept away from the body only by a threat of the night-stick in the hands of Ryan's "beat partner," O'Rourke. Ryan entered the circle of people that hid the body of the dead Chinaman, and addressed O'Rourke:

"All right; here's Lannigan."

O'Rourke grinned. "Glad of it. This

gang ain't got much sympathy for a Chink. They don't see why we should object to their killing off a few."

Lannigan knelt over the body of the murdered Chinaman. He lay sprawled over the dirty sidewalk, arms crushed under him, face down. He wore only the cheap, flimsy cotton shirt and trousers common to their race. One foot was bare, and the slipper that had covered it was lying beside the fire-plug. A dark smudge stained the back of his white shirt on the left side. Protruding from the center of the stain was the handle of a knife. Lannigan pulled it out. He muttered to himself:

"Plumb through the heart. Dead when he dropped."

The knife was long and slender, but made of excellent steel. It was more a stiletto than a knife. Lannigan dropped it into his pocket, determined to examine it for fingerprints a little later. Lannigan looked up at Ryan.

"How about Wang Foo? Any relatives?" he asked.

Ryan shook his head.

"No; all alone as far as I know. Ran the shop by himself, and never had any visitors."

Lannigan rose to his feet.

"All right. You can take him to the morgue. You said something about Dr. Haxell being a witness. Where does he live?"

Ryan pointed down the street.

"Three doors down. Same side of the street. He said he'd tell you everything he knew."

Ryan and O'Rourke left with Wang Foo's body, and Lannigan walked down the street to Dr. Haxell's. The doctor admitted him at once, and escorted him into

his office. Lannigan seated himself, and Dr. Haxell leaned on the edge of his desk. He was a well-built man, who possessed the clear, deep-set eyes of a thinker. Lannigan liked him at once.

Dr. Haxell gave a clear, concise account of everything he had seen.

"My office hours are from two to four, and from seven to nine. I keep no assistant, and consequently when I am not here I am compelled to lock my door. To cut a long story short, at seven this evening when I unlocked my office door and turned on the light at the head of the steps, I happened to glance down the street. Wang Foo was coming out of the door of his shop. He walked to the corner and dropped something in the mail-box. He returned, and was about to enter the door of his shop, when a figure darted out from behind a cart near the curb. He raised his arm. I could see something glitter in his hand. He struck. Wang Foo crumpled up and fell. I ran down my steps, and dashed down the street toward them. Wang Foo's assailant had knelt by the body, and was trying to turn it over. He saw me, got up and ran. I lost him in the darkness. And that's all I know."

Lannigan thought for a moment.

"Did you know who Wang Foo's assassin was? Did you see his face?"

Haxell shook his head.

"No. As you probably know, Wang Foo's shop is not brilliantly lighted. I could not see the features of either of the men. The only way I could distinguish between them was by Wang Foo's walk. I wouldn't swear to it before a jury, but I think Wang Foo's assassin was masked."

Lannigan nodded. "That doesn't explain anything. Where is the motive? Wang Foo wasn't killed just because some one felt like killing him. There was a reason."

Dr. Haxell ventured a suggestion.

"Do you suppose that letter he mailed had anything to do with it?"

Lannigan shrugged.

"It may have, but I doubt it. I believe the motive was robbery."

"Robbery?" Dr. Haxell gasped. "What did Wang Foo possess that any one would be willing to commit murder to obtain?"

"You never can tell about a Chink," Lannigan smiled. "They're a queer race."

"You searched Wang Foo's clothes, didn't you?" Haxell asked.

"Not much to search. Didn't have much on."

"What's your idea of the crime?"

"My idea may be all wrong, but I believe that Wang Foo was killed to obtain something that was supposed to be in his possession. Either Wang Foo did not have the thing the assassin was after, or else the assassin got away with it. I don't know which it is."

"The idea of Wang Foo having anything valuable strikes me as queer. I had to wait over a year for my pay."

"What did you have to do with Wang Foo?" asked the officer.

"It happened last August. Wang Foo's shop was across the street then. The building was burned down and somehow Wang Foo's right eye was gouged out. I put in a hollow glass one for him. He was almost a year paying me."

Lannigan jumped up from his chair as if he had been shot. "My God, man, come along. We may be too late as it is. I've got an idea of the motive."

Haxell followed Lannigan outside and down the street. The crowd in front of Wang Foo's had long since departed, and the shop was dark. The detective passed it without a sideward glance. He was walking rapidly, and it was all the doctor could do to keep up with him. At the call-box on the corner Number 32 was phoning in his hourly report. Lannigan stepped up to him.

"Come along, Ryan, I need you. Where did you take Wang Foo's body?"

Ryan closed the call-box.

"Claver's Morgue. What's up? Found anything yet?"

"Not yet, but we may before the night's over, Lannigan spoke gruffly. "Take us to Claver's Morgue, and get us in without showing a light or making a noise."

"That'll be easy. Claver always leaves the back door open so we can get in without making a noise whenever we bring a body."

Lannigan only smiled, and said "Good!" The three men moved silently among the litter that strewed the alley by the side of the morgue. Ryan showed the way. He opened the door without a sound. The men entered in silence, and Ryan led the way toward the front between grim aisles of caskets and slabs. They were awe-struck. Dusky shapes took form on all sides. Lannigan wanted to pierce the ghostly murk with his flashlight, but knew it would ruin his chances for success. It was all they could do to keep silence in this store-room of the dead.

They had not made a sound. Ryan was in the lead. Lannigan and Haxell moved side by side. They watched the dim shape that moved ahead of them until Ryan stopped. The other two bumped into him. Then Detective Ryan pointed into the dark and spoke in a scarcely audible whisper:

"That's Wang Foo's body on the table there."

The others could see nothing. Lannigan gave a direction:

"All right, Ryan; get out your gun and your flashlight. When I speak your name it will be a signal for you to flash it. I am expecting a caller before the night's over." He shuddered. "What a terrible place to receive him in."

The three took up various positions so that they could wait in comfort. Now that their eyes were accustomed to the darkness, various objects were dimly visible, and they could distinguish the garment that covered Wang Foo's body. They appeared ghostly in the semi-darkness. Caskets and the dull shapes of marble slabs loomed on all sides of them. Ryan crouched at the side of the table on which Wang Foo lay. Haxell sat on a box at one end, and Lannigan, with an automatic on his knee, crouched at the other end, behind a casket. The side opposite Ryan, that nearest the alley door, was left open for Lannigan's prospective caller. They waited for what seemed to be hours, heard every beat of their hearts, and the tick of their watches sounded like the blows of a hammer. The silence was terrible. They were in the presence of death, awaiting they knew not exactly what. A rat

scurried across the floor, and a board squeaked. Way off in the distance a policeman's night-stick sounded on the sidewalk. The silence was getting nerve-racking.

Suddenly Lannigan said:

"Sh-h!"

A tin can rolled in the alley. Eternities seemed to pass. Not a sound. The men waited in the room of death with bated breath. Then a hinge squeaked, but there came no other sound. Lannigan felt a breath of damp air against his cheek. That would be caused by the closing of the alley door. Yet there was no sign of life. Nothing but a vague feeling that some Thing was feeling its way toward them in the darkness. Then a shadowy shape loomed up in the darkness and came closer and closer. Haxell wanted to swear, Lannigan's nails bit into his palms and drew blood, and Ryan's teeth clicked together. The shape hesitated. The rat scurried back to its hole. The shape advanced. A faint odor of alcohol filled the air. Lannigan didn't blame the shape for bolstering up his courage with liquor. Another step the shape advanced; another and still another.

"Cuckee! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

The shape trembled at the song of the clock. Then another soft, stealthy step in the darkness, and it was at the table where it bent over the body of the dead Chinaman. Hands groped forward and searched. They pressed downward. Like a shot a ringing cry split the darkness.

"Ryan!"

A gleam of light shot out of Ryan's flashlight across the table. The shape panted something as the light found his face. Lannigan gasped. It was Boston Frank, the thug and gunman. His hand flew to his hip-pocket, but Lannigan shouted a warning.

"I've got you covered. Hands up!"

The crook obeyed. His hands went aloft fast. Lannigan walked around the table and flashed his light on the face of Wang Foo. The right eye socket was empty.

Then the detective turned to Boston Frank.

"Show me your hands."

The crook lowered his hands and extended them toward Lannigan, palms upward.

In his right palm lay Wang Foo's right eye. In his left lay an immense blue-white diamond.

Lannigan took the diamond and dropped it into his pocket. The eye he held under the ray of his light. It was a veritable shell. Wang Foo had probably hollowed it out himself, judging from the crudeness of the work.

The detective now spoke to Frank.

"We've got you dead to rights. If you tell us everything it may help you a bit."

The thug hung his head. A silvery moon peeped into the window and threw the shadow of the bars across him. He shivered and told everything.

"Wang Foo was the head of a gang that was interested in smuggling precious gems into the States from Canada. There were others in the gang. I won't tell you who they are. It was my part of the game to cross the border with the stones and bring them to Wang Foo. He disposed of them. I was supposed to get ten per cent of what he realized on them. Yesterday I discovered that he had been holding out on me

ever since we worked together. I asked him to come across. I didn't try to force him. I only wanted what was coming to me. Wang Foo refused to listen. I knew that he kept anything of value in the way of a gem in that hollow right eye of his, and I intended to get it. Tonight I knifed him. I didn't want to kill him. Before I could get the diamond Haxell butted in. That's all there is to it. Wang Foo's dead, but I'm damn glad of it. How did you know I was coming here?"

"I didn't know, but I reasoned that Wang Foo wouldn't want a hollow glass eye unless he wanted to hide something valuable in it, and I figured he was killed for that valuable. As Haxell scared off the murderer before he could get what he was after it was easy to assume he would sneak in here to rob the corpse. That's why we were laying for him to make his appearance here. And you are the man."

He snapped a pair of handcuffs on the crook, gripped him firmly by the arm and added savagely:

"Come along."

SHOT BY A MINNEAPOLIS DETECTIVE

A HOT one from Minneapolis: Because he took a chance of seeing his sweetheart, Arthur Brown, an escaped Canadian convict and bank bandit, was shot dead by Detective James Meehan at the door of the home of the young woman, Irene Adams, recently.

The shooting of Brown accounts for two of the five bandits who invaded Minneapolis. Norman Ryan, leader of the gang, was wounded and captured in a gun battle in the Post-office, but Brown and the others escaped after Patrolman Schaaf was probably fatally wounded, and two by-standers were shot down.

After the affray Brown went to his room, changed his clothing and took the Adams girl to a theatre. She told the police she had known him a long time, but was unaware of his criminal career. Then she vol-

unteered to aid in his capture. When he called her on the telephone asking if he might call, she, speaking at the direction of detectives, told him to come.

An hour later Brown knocked at a side door of the house. Detective Forby opened the door a few inches and was instantly recognized by Brown, who drew a revolver. Meehan then fired over Forby's head and the detective's bullet entered Brown's heart. A \$500 reward offered for Brown, dead or alive, by the Superintendent of the Ottawa penitentiary is expected to be paid to Meehan.

Brown's home was in Detroit. He was serving ten years for housebreaking when he escaped from the prison at Kingston, Ont., with three others. Deputy Warden Tucker of the prison and Ryan identified Brown's body.

Mr. Lemar Pays

By CLAUDE H. GILLESPIE

A CASUAL observer looking in upon Detective Bruce Hammond lounging in his favorite chair would have pronounced him a man of twenty-seven, perhaps, a good average of young manhood, college bred and probably struggling for a foothold in some profession. Having finished cataloging his idle impressions, the observer would straightway forget all about him. Then he would have dismissed the man who was known to the head of every police department in the country as "The Tracker." Even now the Detroit department was burning the wires to find this keen detective.

Although he had returned to his cozy bachelor apartment scarcely five minutes before, he was already deep in a silent battle with the author of an article announced as "A Psychologic Study of the Clerical and Small Business Type." It was with the purpose of making observations to combat the author's views that he had just spent two hours along Woodward Avenue and in the neighborhood of the City Hall.

Reluctantly he drew his gaze from the magazine to frown at the telephone with its insistent b-r-r, b-r-r. With his crisp "Bruce Hammond speaking," his inward hostility suddenly gave place to keen interest. Clearly he was eagerly awaiting the moment when he could snap the receiver in place and be off. He was not long restrained. Inspector Logan never wasted words. Ten minutes later Hammond turned his speedy runabout toward Grosse Pointe. His destination was the residence of Raymond Young, one of the men whose genius and industrial daring had made Detroit supreme in the motor world.

Two hours before the butler had found the distorted body of his employer upon a

couch in his private rooms. He had been murdered while he slept.

Evidently the butler was anxiously awaiting Bruce's arrival, for he swung the door wide even as the detective mounted the steps. The butler's personality suggested an alert business man more than a servant. A swift glance at Bruce's card and he conducted him to the room of the tragedy.

The inspector had prepared Bruce to find Tom Daley of the Detective Bureau and the coroner already there.

"Glad to find you in charge, Chief," said Bruce as the two men shook hands.

"I believe you—almost," returned the other. It was mutually understood that the veteran must never willingly be in accord with Bruce to his face; it was to others he explained, "That kid is a miracle. Findin' the Lost Chord would be a cinch."

"Don't leave just yet, Marlo," interrupted Detective Daley as the butler turned to go; "we may need you."

Doctor Martin, the coroner, after completing his examination, remained at Daley's request.

Bruce was already giving his attention to the body as it lay on the couch where the butler had found it. The others now were discreetly silent, watching his swift, sure touches with eager interest. His movements of themselves told them nothing; but they quickly caught up the primitive spirit of the chase which they read in his eyes and in the absorbed alertness of him. There was about him the suggestion of the tracking instinct of a super-bloodhound implanted in a human brain.

Having exhausted the possibilities of the room, he passed through a door that opened into a short hall. A moment later they

heard him descending the stairs that led to the basement.

When he re-entered the room he read in the butler's face eager expectancy; Daley and the coroner seemed to be tolerantly waiting. Apparently as an afterthought Hammond made a circle of the rooms belonging to Mr. Young's private suite.

His first question was addressed to the butler.

"Was Mr. Young a practical mechanic; that is, did he actually operate the machines in the machine shop in the basement?"

"No, sir. He was constantly carrying on experiments of different kinds, but he employed a man by the name of Lewis Miles to do the actual machining and assembling."

"Is there any one in the house who is a machinist?"

"No, sir."

The officer then turned to the coroner.

"Doctor, have you probed the wound?"

"Yes, and extracted this," producing a bullet about an inch long and a quarter of an inch in diameter.

Detective Daley could no longer curb his impatience.

"Listen, boy," he broke in, "you've found the right track, as I knew you would if we gave you time. I know your theory that our every movement writes a truthful record of itself, whereas a witness might twist the truth. I don't have a theory to my name, but I know that when a witness tells me something I can check up on him and sweat the truth out of him. This guy Marlo here is known as the butler, but in various ways acted in a confidential capacity to Mr. Young. His testimony gave me a quick slant on the case."

Bruce was examining the bullet that had killed Mr. Young, but not so intently that he failed to note the distrust in the butler's eyes as he fastened them on Daley while the latter was speaking.

"Was it Mr. Young's habit to lie down in the afternoon?" Bruce asked abruptly.

"Upon the recommend of his physician it has been his daily habit for about a year. It was his custom to lie down shortly after coming home from the factory, or at about four o'clock, and it was a fixed rule that I

should call him at five. This routine was followed today."

"Do many outside the household know of this custom?"

"It is not a subject that Mr. Young would be likely to mention freely. He prided himself on being energetic."

"Did Miles, the mechanic, come here to assist Mr. Young with his experimental work?"

"Yes, sir."

It was noticeable that the butler's answers were ever so slightly strained when suspicion was directed at Miles.

"Tell me something of the nature of these experiments—the last one."

"Mr. Young had great hopes for his latest creation. I am not familiar with its mechanical principles, but it was a motor attachment to produce greater efficiency. The principle is patentable. He would have had a model completed in another month. Whether knowledge of his experiments and their almost certain success has reached his competitors, and they are worried, or it is only a coincidence, I do not know; but there is a powerful motor combine being formed and great pressure has been exerted upon Mr. Young to have him come in. Mr. Frank Lemar and Mr. James Harley are the organizers. Mr. Young repeatedly refused to consider their propositions. However, he promised to meet them for a preliminary discussion at Mr. Lemar's residence at nine tonight. This was a victory for Mr. Young. He was to make known his terms rather than to discuss theirs."

"Negotiations were delayed, then, because it was habitual with Mr. Young to insist upon his full pound of flesh?"

The flush that instantly spread over the butler's face plainly expressed his resentment of the question involving his employer's fairness. The habits of his position, however, were too fixed to betray his feelings in the pleasing modulations of his voice.

"Mr. Young did not have complete confidence in Mr. Lemar. Perhaps it was because they differed so entirely in their view points. Mr. Young classified Mr. Lemar as being of the ultramodern school of business;

while Mr. Young belonged to what he called a dying race—the type of business man that puts ideals and honor above profit.”

“Don’t let him get away with it,” Daley broke in. “Drain him dry. He’s just neglecting to mention the quarrel Mr. Young and Miles had a few nights ago. I almost believe he’s trying to shield that fellow. He asked Headquarters to have you on the case, but don’t let that influence you too much.”

“I am here to do my duty regardless,” answered Bruce quietly. “About the quarrel, please, Marlo?”

“It was a disagreement regarding the value of Miles’s services. Miles contended that he should receive higher wages than is paid ordinary mechanics for being honest. He is thoroughly familiar with the invention and even contributed ideas that Mr. Young adopted. He demanded ten thousand dollars, payable in stock, when the invention proved a success. Mr. Young refused to discuss the matter, telling him to ‘clear out of here, and don’t come back.’ Miles simply didn’t use tact, for Mr. Young was a very reasonable man, and in his own way a generous one; but he would not be dictated to. Detective Daley makes much of this remark, spoken by Miles as he left Mr. Young on the night of the disagreement: ‘If you won’t pay in money, you will pay in another way.’ Without doubt he meant that he would hit back at Mr. Young by offering his own ideas of the invention to competitors of Mr. Young. But Miles would not really do that. He is inherently honest, or Mr. Young would never have trusted him. Mr. Young knew men.”

“Thank you, Marlo. You have cleared up several puzzling points. I wanted to know just what your interest in Miles was. You like fair play, I take it, and in your heart believe Miles was justified in expecting a higher remuneration than Mr. Young seemed willing to give. You believe Miles is innocent, and secretly you oppose Mr. Daley because he has had him locked up.”

“How, if I may ask, did you know that Miles was already under arrest?” asked the butler. It seemed that this likable young man was more astute than he appeared to be.

“I wasn’t sure. However, knowing something of Mr. Daley’s methods, it was a natural mental step to assume he had had Miles taken into custody. If his subordinates had failed, Mr. Daley wouldn’t be inactive now. It is also evident that an air-gun I found in the passage leading to the basement was fashioned by a skilled mechanic. Being remodeled from a .32-caliber smooth-bore rifle, its large air chamber and powerful spring make it capable of inflicting the wound that killed Mr. Young. The oily smudge that smears the stock and other wooden parts is peculiar to things a machinist uses. Those oily stains did not come from the hands of anybody in the house, and I’ve learned the gun does not belong here. Mr. Daley or his men brought it here after they had searched Miles’s repair-shop.”

“Correct, boy,” beamed Detective Daley. “I put the gun out of sight to let you come to a conclusion in your own way. I thought of an air-gun, and pumped from Marlo the fact that Miles owned one—made it to plug musical cats that annoyed him. My men found some more, hand-made bullets to match the one the coroner extracted from the wound. Here they are; compare them.”

Bruce took the dozen or more conical steel pellets from Daley, placed them on the flat-top desk, giving them scarcely a glance.

“Were the furnace men here today, and what time did they leave?” he asked.

“They were here today, and left at four o’clock,” answered Marlo. “They have been working for two days, during which time we have used electric heaters. This is the only room that has a gas-log.”

“And the outside entrance to the basement was not locked behind them?”

“No, sir.”

“That is all. Perhaps you would be interested in my deductions.”

A subtle hint in his tone and inflection gave two of his listeners a thrill of expectancy. He was going to disagree with Detroit’s Chief of Detectives!

“Spin your yarn, boy,” from Daley.

“I’ll take you over the ground I traveled. Here is a smudge on the polished surface of the couch. It came from the wearer’s knee being pressed there as he leaned over

the couch. The smudge is of machine-shop origin, the imprint of the fabric in the smudge is the same as would be made by a machinist's overalls. The fact that the man's knee was pressed here indicates he was tall and, more important, was left-handed, otherwise he would have stood sidewise and the side of his leg would have left a long narrow mark, if any at all."

"But that's drawing things too fine," Daley broke in. "He simply pressed the gun to Mr. Young's breast and fired. He didn't have to lean over the couch, although it is unusually wide."

"Perhaps I should have told you at first that Mr. Young was not killed by a bullet fired from that air-gun—or from any other gun. Mr. Young was stabbed!"

Daley started a verbal explosion, but Bruce stayed him by a motion of his hand.

"The man who used the air-gun was right-handed, as shown by the impressions on the grip and barrel. This eliminates Miles. If Miles had done the deed, he would not have directed suspicion to himself by using a weapon he was known to possess, and of which there was no duplicate in the city.

"Oh!" grunted Daley.

"I'll next call your attention to these two drops of blood near the bottom of the right trousers leg. There are no other similar spots near, as the small wound over the heart flowed rather than gushed. They were not caused by blood soaking through, as the stain does not show on the inside. They were caused by blood dripping from the weapon with which Mr. Young was killed; therefore he must have been stabbed."

"I see."

"Here, on this chair, we find a clue to the weapon in these slight checks in the leather back. I was puzzled at first, as the only instrument that suggested itself that would make such indentations was the checkered grip on a rifle; but my clues were contradicting each other. When I thought of a knurled surface, such as the roughened handles of plug gauges, my clues harmonized. It also suggested a machinist, and a left-handed one, as the knurled handle of some weapon evidently protruded from his

left-hand pocket as he hurried from the room. The slight scratches on the floor tell that the chair was moved, and in which direction. This also indicates the manner of entrance and exit. We will go down the stairs to the basement, as he did."

No one spoke while they followed him to the basement.

"Here you will notice a pair of canvas gloves, a new pair, and practically free from stains. They belong to one of the furnace repair men. He left them on this bench beside his tools. One lies flat, as he placed it when he finished work. The other crumpled, pulled nearly inside out. It is the glove for the left hand. A second man wore this. His hand was too large; he had difficulty in removing it, and he was in a hurry. In this small spot of furnace cement in the palm of the glove we find little squares similar to those in the leather chair. The weapon with which Mr. Young was killed was without doubt specially machined for the purpose. In this connection, I shall mention that the bullet that was extracted from the wound is made of hardened drill-rod, highly polished, while those made by Miles are soft, cold rolled steel, slightly polished; they are also of smaller diameter."

Daley nodded.

"Now, Chief, if you are ready, we will pick up a couple of patrolmen, go to Mr. Lemar's, and await the arrival of the murderer. He is due there at about nine, and will probably be early. We must precede him, or he will have two more slayings to his credit."

"All right," from Daley. "I've got my man where I can get him when I want him. Your clues are too fine, boy; I just can't see them. Anyway, no disadvantage can come from having an extra prisoner or two."

"You are not going to hold Miles now?" Marlo asked.

"For the present," Bruce explained; "we want the other fellow to feel safe. Do not telephone Mr. Lemar; let him expect Mr. Young."

Half an hour later Detectives Bruce and Daley stopped their cars in an advantageous position near the entrance to the Lemar

grounds. They intended to appear as two passing motorists who were taking advantage of a chance meeting to exchange small talk. Two men in the rear seat of Daley's closed car, however, had no part in the conversation, nor were they otherwise noticeable. They were policemen.

They had no means of knowing the identity of the man who briskly approached the Lemar entrance and passed in, yet something in his swift glance of appraisal simultaneously put both Bruce and Daley on the alert. The four men quickly followed, hugging the shadows of the shrubbery that bordered the wide walk.

He was a large man, but carried himself with the lithe grace of the athlete. Little was discernible of his features, as his face was in shadow of his drooping hat brim. He tapped a foot nervously while awaiting an answer to his ring. A maid opened the door.

"May I see Mr. Lemar?"

"What name shall I give him, please?"

"Tell him Mr. Loche of the experimental department must speak with him. It is important—very."

The maid hesitated as Bruce and Daley came into the circle of light. Bruce acted quickly when suspicion leaped into the man's eyes, and his left hand darted to the pocket of his overcoat.

"Go easy," he spoke in the man's ear from behind, as he pressed a gun to his back, and gripped his hand.

With the surprising strength and quickness of a great cat, Loche sprang clear. The maid screamed as Daley tackled, football fashion, and the two crashed to the porch floor. Although a powerful man, Daley's best seemed puny against the frenzied strength of the all but madman. Bruce was wholly occupied in preventing the use of the gun. With the coming of the two policemen, a handcuffed prisoner was soon dragged from the tangle of arms and legs.

The door swung inward ever so little. The sight of the two blue uniforms evidently gave assurance to the cautious observer inside. Then the door swung wide, and Mr. Lemar's imperious figure stood out against the light. The other man was Mr. Harley.

"Well?" he demanded.

Mr. Lemar's inflection in giving utterance to that single word, together with a suggestive something about the man, hinted his secret inventory of men and their relative importance in the scheme of things. The world contained two classes of people—himself and others.

"Our arrival was most timely, Mr. Lemar," Bruce interrupted, as Daley was about to speak. "Your man was armed and sufficiently desperate to use a gun. This experience should be both a lesson and a warning."

When Loche faced Mr. Lemar he seemed to expand as with a rising pressure of suppressed fury within. Mr. Lemar drew back as from a blow before the murderous hatred that distorted Loche's face.

"Sol!" he panted. Then his words came hot and ugly, like bullets from a machine gun. His voice rose rapidly like a yell from the throat of a maddened jungle brute.

"Loche is dangerous now, eh? Yes! So you notify the police. But not until Loche had done your will. You led him on, then you double-crossed him. For that with my two hands shall I kill you!"

He plunged at Mr. Lemar.

The two officers closed in upon him. While he struggled, he pleaded to be released.

"For only five minutes, let me free. Then you may take me. Please—please, I say!"

Mr. Lemar had now recovered his habitual self-assurance.

"If that fool has tried to buck the law, that's his misfortune," he rasped out. "I know nothing of his private life, and care less. Take him away."

"It is necessary to ask you to accompany us to Headquarters for a hearing," Bruce countered.

Swift anger blackened Mr. Lemar's features. His voice was lower, if anything, but it held an intense, almost menacing, quality.

"What is this? Have you taken upon yourself the job of implicating me, or of holding me responsible for something this pup has done? If you have, clear out—and you be damned!"

"Loche killed Raymond Young late this afternoon. I believe that in some way he chooses to connect you with the crime."

Mr. Lemar's hauteur suddenly dropped away. During the moment he stood in dignified silence one felt the depth of his quiet regard for Mr. Young, mingled with which there was no concern for himself. It appeared that Bruce had made a grave error.

There was no dictatorial inflection in the tones of the now changed Mr. Lemar; rather it was the awed voice of a man who hoped to convince by his own simple sincerity.

"Gentlemen," he said, "this hits home harder than you will believe, or I myself would have thought possible. Perhaps it is because I had such deep regard for Mr. Young and studiously avoided every opportunity to let it come to the surface lest it deflect my business judgment. Denial of the natural human instinct to form friendships has been part of the price I have paid for success."

Slowly he turned to Loche. Neither his eyes nor his voice held accusation—only a great sadness.

"Loche! Loche! I'm sorry for you. Better than anybody else, I know the unfortunate twist that prods your mind to dwell on fancied wrongs, and your excitable nature that seems always to border on violence."

His eyes showed something of their former defiance as they bored into Bruce's, while his voice betrayed restraint.

"You are an officer, I presume. Then technically I am under arrest."

"My request is not at all unusual. For your own protection you should hear Loche's statement, when you will be given the opportunity to make one of your own."

"It is too much, no doubt, to expect you to see how preposterous it is to associate my name, even in the remotest sense, with this awful thing. What could your objection be to permitting Loche to have his say here in the privacy of my den? If the man's madness makes a statement from me necessary, I can put it in writing. On what grounds are you seeking to implicate me, anyway?"

"We have no evidence whatever," Bruce answered frankly. "Your appearance at Headquarters would be formality to enable us to properly close the case. Neither Mr. Daley nor I want to seem arbitrary; neither of us want to disregard your reasonable wish to avoid publicity. Under the circumstances, I'll not oppose your wishes."

Leading the way into a spacious room that was fitted up as an office, Mr. Lemar indicated seats to the others. Either from habit or design, he chose for himself the comfortable chair behind the protecting barrier of a heavy flat-top desk at the side of the room.

"Gentlemen," he said, "tonight, in this room, across this desk, Mr. Young, Mr. Harley and I were to consummate an agreement that would have brought us three into a close business relationship." Mr. Harley confirmed his statement by a nod. "Let Loche speak. I will not interrupt him."

Bruce seated himself near his prisoner. His hand rested ever so lightly on the other's arm, his voice was low and even, both inconspicuous efforts to restrain the excitable Loche.

"Tell us, Loche, what you meant when you said Mr. Lemar led you on to do his will."

"I tell you, yes. First, I tell you that I killed Mr. Young. It was a mistake, and which I will explain. I killed him because I hated him. I was made to feel it was my duty to hate him."

"Mine was a long struggle after I came to America from Austria four years ago. I did not speak the language, and could claim only the most menial of jobs. Although I was a skilled mechanic, everybody was too busy to bother with a damn foreigner."

"I came to Detroit. I knew English now; three years of night study had helped me. I had no big hopes; I was only ready to try again."

"I felt my luck had changed soon after I got with the Lemar Motor Company. After a while I was put in the experimental room. Sometimes I worked on Mr. Lemar's own ideas, and see him every day, many times. I tried so hard to please. He

was the only man in America that give me my chance. Once I worked through two days and a night to finish a job for Mr. Lemar. He was very pleased. He say to me: 'Loche, some day you will have a better job—a big job. The same thing stops you that stops me from getting what I want.' Then he tell me about the big auto combine he planned. Without the Young Company the combine fall down, and Mr. Young not listen to reason. I hate Young then. He stand in my way, too. Mr. Lemar talk to me many times after that. Always he speak of the combine and Mr. Young.

"Mr. Lemar always is cunning like the fox. When he learned that Mr. Young was experimenting with important motor improvements, he instructed me to become friendly with Miles, his helper. I was to absorb, he called it, Young's ideas. Miles was discourteous—very. I resolved to make him suffer with Young.

"An air-gun I saw in Miles's work-shop gave me a valuable idea. I designed a holder for a quarter-inch bullet such as Miles used. The bullet provides the point for a stiletto. A plunger running the length of the hollow holder unseated the bullet when it was driven home. A knurled handle and a pin to hold the plunger in place made the weapon complete. A quick thrust and the little air-gun would be a witness against its owner.

"I killed Young because he planned to come to a business meeting here tonight. He would be the big boss. Mr. Lemar told me so. I would lose everything with Mr. Lemar. I resolved the meeting must not be. When I saw the officers come for Miles, I knew I was safe.

"I allowed time for Mr. Lemar to hear Young was dead. Then I came here. Now something made me doubt Mr. Lemar. I never had before. If he played me false, I would kill him.

"It was so. Lemar, the fox, had the officers waiting for me. I stepped into his trap."

The piecing together of his story had been a laborious mental struggle. Because of that his captors had somewhat relaxed their early alertness.

They were unprepared, then, when he threw himself to the floor with a peculiar whirling motion. Landing on a shoulder, a heave of his body carried him under Mr. Lemar's desk. A painful twist of one of that gentleman's feet brought him and his heavy revolving chair crashing to the floor. Now partially rising under the desk, Loche managed to deal confusion to the officers as they sprang for him. They bumped en masse into the overturned desk.

The desk lamp being screwed to the desk and the extension cord being looped around an arm of the chandelier, the chandelier was torn from the wall. In the sudden darkness the officers lost their bearings. To further perplex their confused senses, a heavy piece of furniture went down, accompanied by the crash and jingle of breaking glass. Then there followed a sinister silence. From down among the wreckage came the labored breathing of one man where two had struggled before.

The momentary flash of a match revealed a policeman's uniform as he darted to a door. A second later the room was flooded with light from the hall. There was disclosed a repulsive yet fascinating sight. Loche, whose passion-distorted face suggested a great ape as, with his manacled hands, he twisted and wrenched the throat of the unconscious Mr. Lemar. A jagged purple cut across his victim's forehead told that he had been knocked senseless by the falling of the heavy filing cabinet.

Necessity compelled the policemen to hammer Loche's wrists with their clubs to break his hold. During this mauling his right forearm was smashed.

The unusual breach in the smooth order of the household brought a group of curious servants to the front of the house. The houseman gave immediate and efficient attention to his employer. While the others made the now partially conscious man comfortable on a couch in another room, he called the family physician.

Loche had lapsed into a sullen silence. It was while they were waiting to learn the extent of Mr. Lemar's injuries that Bruce discovered the badly bruised condition of his prisoner's wrist. He promised him medical

attention as soon as Mr. Lemar's doctor was at liberty.

Reporting at Headquarters and delivering their prisoner closed the case as far as the detectives were concerned.

When Bruce went out to his parked car, Daley followed him, as Bruce knew he would.

"It's getting to be danged monotonous, boy, this being beaten by a kid," Daley began. "I guess the old man is slowin' up. From where I stand it don't look right for Loche to be in that cell all alone; but you can't touch Lemar."

"No," answered Bruce, "you can't touch Lemar. He is a common enough type in the industrial world—the possessor of a dominating personality, and an insatiable greed for power. And he sincerely believes that he is benefiting his race when he selfishly employs any and every means to gain still more power."

"Marlo's testimony first prompted my interest in Lemar. Mr. Young distrusted Lemar and, judging by the man's position in the business world, it was highly probable that Mr. Young's judgment of men was reliable. Since Mr. Young was killed by a bullet similar to those used by Miles in his air-gun, it was an easy step to reason the murderer had intended to direct suspicion to Miles. It followed that he knew something of Miles's affairs; then he must know

of the relations between Miles and Mr. Young. Such knowledge could be ordinarily gained only by spying. This thought suggested business competitors, particularly the big combine headed by Lemar. Of course, nothing crude was to be expected of Lemar. I must look for a hireling ensnared possibly by his own avarice and disguised promises. Such a theory dovetailed with the clues that the crime was committed by a machinist."

"Yep, it's good reasoning," admitted Daley; "but it ain't clear yet how you could be sure Loche would go to Lemar's house, and go prepared to kill him."

"Loche felt safe as long as Miles was locked up; yet the thought of his crime would prey upon his mind and make him restless. He would want to know his new standing with Lemar. In self-interest, if for no other reason, Lemar would denounce him, for which Loche would kill him."

"Good. You sure made the most of your hand, boy. Oh, yes, I nearly forgot. What part of the doctor's remarks in the hall did I miss that made Loche almost happy? I mean when Loche burst out with, 'Good! Then he, too, must pay.'"

"The doctor said that the severe compression of Mr. Lemar's throat had permanently paralyzed certain nerves. Frank Lemar will never speak again."

Dailey only grunted.

FOILED BY A ROOKIE COP

CONFESSING, police allege, to the attempted theft of Government revenue stamps valued at \$116,000, Charles Daly, twenty-one, assistant cashier of the Harlem Branch of the United States Revenue Department, was locked up in West 123d street station pending action by Federal authorities. Albert Seigle, No. 248 West 112th street, alleged to be his confederate, was arrested.

Joseph Collins, a "rookie" policeman, arrested the two in 125th street, after questioning them concerning a bulky package wrapped in newspaper which they carried.

Police allege \$7,333 worth of stamps were found in the package. Stamps worth \$60,000 also were found in an unused chimney in the Harlem revenue office, where Daly is alleged to have confessed he had dropped them with the intention of removing them later.

Gambling debts, detectives said, were blamed by Daly for the theft. Daly is alleged to have had a key to the revenue office and the combination of the safe, which contained stamps worth \$125,000 and \$75.60 in cash. Daly, it is charged, took the cash and all but \$9,000 in stamps.

Cold Pearls

By ROBERT RUSSELL

PART TWO

CHAPTER FOUR

JUST FACING DEATH

SLOWLY Vane turned to Templeton and held out something he had picked from the floor by Fortescue's side. "Mr. Templeton," he said, "is this your necklace?"

Templeton took the string of pearls from the detective's hand, just as the latter stepped back and caught Louise Durant in his arms as she started to fall.

"Yes," said Templeton, "this is my necklace." Then, speaking quickly, he went on. "Louise," he cried, real sorrow in his voice, "I wanted to save you all this—what has happened—what can I do?"

But the girl's eyes were closed. She did not hear his words.

The hard crust seemed to fall from the face of Lodge Templeton as he helped Vane carry the girl to the divan, where the rose-tinted light just penetrated. The death of the man whom he had sought to defeat in the fight for Louise's affections had worked a strange change in him. He sat close to the divan as the maid, summoned from her room, ministered to her mistress. He seemed to pay little attention to the words of the physician, who was called hastily to see if anything could be done in the case of Fortescue. He did not heed Vane and the physician as they conferred for a few minutes. He seemed completely lost in contemplation of the beautiful girl who, in these tragic moments, seemed all the world to him.

Louise Durant refused to leave the room and be taken to her own. She had spoken little, and she had not been urged to tell more of her call from Fortescue, his fall and her decision to pretend that he was not there in order to avoid the comment that would come, until certain officials arrived. She, as well as Templeton, answered their questions briefly, and when they had gone she expressed no surprise, nor did the wealthy man who was so devoted to her, that the official inquiry was of such short duration.

They did not know of the conferences outside the room, apparently, in which Vane had given the orders, nor of the young detective's telephoning from the office downstairs. They did not know that the delicate mechanism of the police force of the city had been set at work, and that, while Louise Durant lay on that divan where the rays like the light from a rose fell, while Lodge Templeton bent over her, speaking gently, that mechanism was working with young Vane as the engineer.

Since the moment Vane had drawn back the portiere, disclosing the dead body of Fortescue, the young detective had spoken no sharp word. He had made no accusations, moving about the room, conferring with this man and that with an air of quiet command that seemed to add years to his age. When it had been necessary to speak to the girl his tone had been gentle. Quiet dignity had marked his attitude toward Templeton. No one would have been able to decide what he made of the tragic and mysterious affair. He seemed to be waiting for something, and the silence that followed the departure of the others who had been called to the apartment finally became oppressive.

It was the girl who finally broke the silence. The maid had been dismissed. Only Vane, Templeton and the girl remained in the room where the rose-tinted light had seemed to turn from a light of beauty to a livid, blood-red glow. Never had the atmosphere of the theater thrown such intensity about this girl who possessed the art of the great actress as well as the beauty and musical charm of voice which had made her the most prominent of the season's theatrical luminaries. Never had she had so important an audience as that which now listened to her words. They were but two men. One of them craved her with that passionate selfishness of mind possible only in a man of advanced years who had been able to secure everything in life that he desired. The other looked upon her as the one person in all the world who could make certain the conviction which possessed him. He missed no inflection of her voice as she spoke now.

"Well," she said, holding her head very straight and looking straight into Vane's eyes, "a man was found dead in my apartment. I was an actress with an actress' reputation for being unconventional, at least. You are a detective. They have been here to investigate. And still you sit there doing nothing. Am I to be arrested?"

"Wait, Louise," interrupted Templeton. "You must let me arrange all this. There is no one else—now."

"There never was any one else," the girl went on. "Mr. Fortescue wanted me to marry him, and I would have done it just to get away from this city and live in peace. But I did not love him—I cared for him, and perhaps it would have helped him, too. He was jealous. He feared that I could not remain as I have been. Your gifts, Mr. Templeton, are all there in that lower drawer of my writing desk. You have complained that I never wore your jewels. I did not care to. You would not refrain from continually giving presents me—well, I took the easier way and accepted them, just to put them away with the rest. See," and she rose from the divan, crossed to the desk and pulled open the lower drawer.

For a moment she gazed down into the thing, then drew back slowly.

"Some one—some one," she said at last, "has been here. Many of the jewels are missing." She remained standing there, looking down into the drawer. Templeton came to her side quickly. Vane, of Headquarters, watched.

"Really, Louise," said Templeton, bending over and seeming to touch one or two of the gems which lay there set in all manner of shapes, "it does not matter. They were yours to wear or to throw away."

He closed the drawer partially, then looked down again, questioningly. He reached forward and took something from the receptacle, glanced at it, closed the drawer again and tried to lead the girl back to the divan.

"But some one has robbed me," the girl repeated. "And no one knew they were there, except——"

"Except your maid?" suggested Templeton.

The girl shook her head.

"My maid," she said, "has been with me ever since I was a baby. She would rob herself to give to me; she could not touch the things I had forbidden her even to look at."

Gently Templeton urged the girl to the divan, where he seated himself beside her. She seemed in a daze, gazing still at the drawer.

"Who besides yourself and your maid knew of the jewels in the drawer?" asked Vane.

The girl shook her head silently. Templeton glanced at the detective and spoke again to the girl.

"What we want to know most of all, Louise," he said, "is how Mr. Fortescue died. That Mr. Vane will be able to tell us. Was it a natural death, Mr. Vane?"

"He was poisoned," was the reply.

The girl's hands tightened in an involuntary clasp, but her eyes remained on the closed drawer.

"And I suppose," she said slowly, her eyes still turned again from the men, "that they will say I poisoned him."

Templeton rose quickly to his feet, and

began pacing up and down the room. His beak-like nose narrowed, his eyes became hard. All the autocratic characteristics of which he was possessed combined in his expression, his bearing, to make him seem the leader of slaves who must believe what he said, obey his commands.

"It is absurd!" he exclaimed. "They will accuse you of nothing. I have been trying to spare your feelings, Louise, because I love you and I wanted to refrain from saying anything about your friend Fortescue. But I would even hurt your feelings rather than have you accused of poisoning the man. You ought to know all about him—you ought to know that you have been saved from a life, perhaps, of unhappiness."

Templeton's face was white; his thin lips were pressed together in a long, pale, straight line. The girl seemed not to hear. Vane sat back, legs crossed, head a little bent, watching Lodge Templeton as he rushed through his tale.

"Fortescue knew you threw my gifts into that drawer," the man went on. "He knew that you love jewels and looked at the ones I gave you only for a few minutes, then you never wore them. He was hard up; he longed to give you presents. He stole from that drawer—and I shall prove it to you in a moment. He sold my jewels to buy others for you."

The girl on the divan shuddered, but she did not reproach him for his accusation of the dead. Vane sank a little lower in his chair. Deep lines appeared on his face, running downward from the corners of his mouth.

"Fortescue came to my house tonight, drunk," Templeton went on, "or rather, in a condition that would soon become drunkenness. I confess I was not pleasant with him. I tempted him to drink more, perhaps. He stole this necklace from me," and Templeton reached over to the table and picked up the string of pearls he had dropped there after Vane had handed it to him when he had found it by the side of the dead Fortescue.

"The pearls were for you, Louise," he went on, "and I spoke of them—told him

where they were, in fact, tempting him to see if he were low enough to steal from me. And we found them here beside his dead body."

"He had not shown them to me," interposed the girl dreamily. "I did not know."

"How he stole them I don't pretend to know," Templeton continued. "It doesn't matter. But he brought them here. When the effects of what he had taken to drink began to wear off he realized what a fool he had made of himself. He knew that I might see the necklace; that I could fasten the crime upon him. Then, Louise, Vane"—and Templeton spoke with the impressiveness of one whose conviction was absolute—"then he did what I should have done under the circumstances—what I should do any moment I found I would be found out in something that would bring disgrace—he took poison—he committed suicide just as he was about to give the pearls to you."

Now the girl turned her head and gazed at the speaker a moment. The woman in her, sleeping so long under the trying situation, now seemed to waken. The primitive instinct rose. Slowly she asked the question:

"He stole—for me? Then, to save me disgrace, he killed himself?"

Templeton's laugh was harsh.

"No, not to save you disgrace," he replied, "but to escape the thing he feared—a trial and the disgrace to himself. He was not thinking of you, Louise."

Into the silence that came after the echo of Lodge Templeton's laugh intruded a loud knock at the door. The girl and Templeton started, but Vane, half-apologetically, rose to open.

"I was expecting a message," he said. "I had to telephone to some people where I might be found." He opened the door and received a little package from the boy. It contained a short note and something else. Vane stood a moment in the hall reading the words, then stuck the package with the note in his pocket and returned to the others.

"I was much interested in your theory of Fortescue's death, Mr. Templeton," he said. "What makes you think the poison

that killed him was self-administered and that he had been stealing articles from Miss Durant's drawer? Of course a skeleton key would explain the theft of the necklace."

Templeton crossed and pointed dramatically to the spot where the body of Fortescue had been found.

"While you were not looking," he said to the detective, an expression of cunning on his face, "I found something in Fortescue's pocket. I did not tell you because I did not want the fact that he had committed suicide in Miss Durant's room to come out. Now I see it is necessary."

He handed Vane a tiny druggist's envelope which was about half-full of a fine, grayish powder.

"That," continued Templeton, "is poison, deadly poison. I am something of a chemist and I know."

"This, indeed, is valuable evidence," acquiesced Vane. He turned to the sideboard and poured out half a glass of water. Then he stirred the water with a spoon, turning and smiling in spite of the serious situation. He carried the glass into the other room and set it on the table there under the rays of the pink-tinted shade.

"I want to see if it dissolves quickly," he added. "I am familiar with that poison. It was used in the celebrated Middleberry case. "Now," he went on, glancing again at the glass and smiling, "if any of us want to commit suicide we have everything all prepared."

Templeton looked at the glass of innocent appearing water, and through the minds of all passed the thought of what he had said of Fortescue—and what he had said he himself would do if disgrace confronted him. He, Lodge Templeton, would not live to fight if scandal came to his old name. That was his statement. That was his character. Pride in self, in name, dominated the man. All things were his by right. His own life was his to do with as he pleased. That was the only creed he knew.

"Ah," cried the girl, her hands outstretched, her white face drawn as if she could stand no more, "why all this talk of death and suicide? Do something. Arrest

me—or go and leave me—and—and leave that glass of poison."

As though he had been waiting for his cue Vane, of Headquarters, straightened up in his chair, then rose and stood in the center of the floor. As upon the stage a silence comes when the great star first appears, after which the applause resounds, so now a silence came, all the more pronounced because of the lack of the applause which should follow.

"Templeton," said Vane quickly, "how did you know Fortescue had been to that drawer? I saw you take something from it and slip it in your pocket."

"This," cried the man, pausing and facing the detective.

He held out his right hand and in it lay the golden cigarette case of Fortescue—the case Fortescue had dropped upon the table in Templeton's home that evening.

"Perhaps that is Fortescue's case," said Vane, "and I have said I saw you take something from that drawer. But I did not tell you that I saw you also put something in that drawer before you got it out. And I did not tell you," the young man went on quickly, "that you did not get that poison from the pocket of Fortescue. My eyes have never left you since you came into this room, and the body was gone before I left the room. You never went near the body."

Slowly Lodge Templeton moved backward toward the table where stood the glass of innocent-looking water Vane had placed there. Backward, backward, as Vane went on.

"Moreover," he said, pressing home his accusation, "I have just received from the druggist at whose store we stopped coming down here tonight a piece of that broken wineglass and information telling me that the sediment of that same poison was in the bottom of the piece of that wineglass I picked up from the floor and put in my pocket up at your house."

"And when you toppled that table, trying to break that glass which you had forgotten to put away before I came," he hurried on, "you did not reach out to save the glass nearest to the place where you were

sitting—the place where Fortescue had sat earlier in the evening. You reached across the table and saved the glass that was innocent—the glass that you had been drinking from. You wanted to destroy the other glass—the glass your caller had used, for you knew poison was there. It was at that moment that I began to suspect. That, coupled with your statement of locking the reception door and no one coming into the hallway showed me the necklace could not have been stolen from that room after Fortescue had come—unless it was stolen by some one after we left—and you said the necklace was gone; that was the reason you telephoned for a detective.”

The hand of Lodge Templeton reached around behind him, groping, groping for the glass of innocent-looking stuff. The girl stood silent, her great eyes upon the accusing ones of the man from Headquarters.

“I charge you, Lodge Templeton,” said Vane, “with having poisoned Fortescue. The poison came from that packet you just said you took from his pocket. It takes some time to bring death. It killed Fortescue while he was here.” He turned to the girl. “When did Fortescue come here, Miss Durant? Was it not just before we came?”

“About five minutes before,” she replied.

“So the clerk downstairs told me,” continued Vane. “I have known this a long time, Templeton. And don’t think I am going over all these details without a purpose. I have a purpose and you will help me accomplish it.”

Now Templeton’s hand grasped the glass. But it was held behind his back. The others could not see.

“All this,” said Templeton coldly, “is nonsense, of course. I admit I may have misplaced the necklace and Fortescue may have merely closed the door and not gone out at all when I thought he did. Then he may have found the pearls, but certainly he stole them. We found them beside his body.”

His hand held the glass less firmly now. Perhaps, after all, he might convince them.

“Admitting that is the pearl necklace you own,” returned Vane patiently but quickly,

“I am convinced, from the seat you took when you came into this room—over there with your back to the portiere—that you saw the same thing I saw.”

“Yes?”

“Yes, and that thing was a man’s foot sticking out from beneath the portiere. That fitted your plan exactly. You guessed that the poison had worked and that Fortescue lay there back of the curtains. You wanted to disgust Louise Durant with him by showing he was a thief. His foot was visible as I looked beneath your chair. And, Templeton, I saw your hand move toward those curtains, just where they met. But I did not know what it meant until I picked up the string of pearls. And then, Templeton, I knew those pearls had not been in this hot room a long time—I knew they had been carried here and just brought in from the outside—I knew, or I was pretty sure, that when your hand had moved back to the curtain you had thrown those pearls back there so that they would be found beside Fortescue’s body—for those pearls were cold. You planned an ‘official investigation’ by me just to protect yourself. You did not believe you could be suspected.”

Suddenly, with the movement that signifies the end, Lodge Templeton raised the glass of innocent-looking liquid to his lips and, with a huge draught, emptied it of its contents.

“I drink to the bride—in the place where I will go,” he cried. “I am terribly tired of what is going on here.”

Louise Durant darted forward and seized his upraised hand.

“Ah,” she cried, “I don’t care about you or your hereafter. But it is horrible—horrible.”

“Thus,” murmured Vane, “you have done as I hoped you would do, as I mentioned a moment ago. You have aided me in the purpose I had in talking over all these disgusting details. Now that you have decided to escape the annoyance of a trial for murder, is there anything that you wish to add before the dramatic end comes?”

“Merely,” said Lodge Templeton, drawing himself up to his full height, “that I

am quite satisfied with my last acts. I disposed of a sentimental idiot who thought he loved the girl I wanted to have. I may have miscalculated a little in the time it took for the poison to work. No one knew that Fortescue was coming to my house, and I figured he would die on the streets and no one would know the cause; or, if poison was suspected, no one would know where he got it. I say this in apology for the carelessness on my part, not for any ordinary reason. And, really, I don't mind at all if the facts are known. Fortescue was weak. I am strong. I choose to do as I please with my life, and even a most beautiful woman"—and he bowed low to the shrinking girl—"whom I am confident I could possess if I cared about continuing the effort—even she cannot keep me from trying this last great adventure. That is all I have to say, except that I trust Miss Durant will wear the pearls about her neck so that, hereafter, they will be kept warm. I would not mind, even"—and into his eyes came again the evil glow which belonged there—"I would not mind, even, if they became so warm they would sometimes—sometimes—often scorch her through to her silly, sentimental heart which believes in goodness."

"I think," said Vane quietly, "that will be about all, Templeton. Possibly you are right about Fortescue stealing the jewels from Miss Durant's desk. I will admit I prepared that glass from which you have just drunk in order that you would drink it and make some such statement as you have." He stepped to the door which, un-

noticed, had been open a crack. He threw it open, and two tall policemen entered. Vane pointed to Templeton and they stepped to his side.

"You see," he went on, "there are two worthy witnesses to your confession in addition to Miss Durant and myself." Then, to the officers, he added: "Take the man away, boys."

Again Templeton laughed.

"The poison will work long before the night air chills me," he said.

"It would," replied Vane with a boyish smile, "if there had been any poison in the glass. I did not put poison in the glass. It was a mean trick on my part, but I did want that confession of yours as you would give it facing death."

Abruptly he turned his back on the man and spoke low to the girl who stood pathetic in her appeal.

"Miss Durant," he said, "I always take a half-day off after a case like this. Don't you suppose you'd help me try a new roadster I've just bought—say tomorrow—the fields and the trees are just beginning to look like the garden of Eden. Won't you come?"

(The end)

COMING IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

A NEW TWO-PART STORY ENTITLED

"WITH EYES AND NOSE"

By RALPH E. DYAR

PICKPOCKETS STOLE MAN'S LAST NICKEL

PICKPOCKETS stole \$30 from Emil Olsen, of Jersey City, when he was in Brooklyn the night of October 14. He reported his loss to a police station and a dime for carfare was given to him. He put a nickel in the turnstile at the Fifty-fifth street station of the Fourth avenue subway line, Brooklyn, lay down on a bench in the station and went to sleep. Two men came

up to him and one took his last nickel from his pocket. The two men, who were seen by a newsboy, were found guilty of robbery in the second degree by a jury before Judge Martin in Kings County Court. They both got terms in prison.

The men are John Curry, of 174 Fifth avenue, and Carmine Imbriale of 35 Cumberland street, both Brooklyn.

The Eternal Detail

By CHARLES ALMA BYERS

DESPITE his heaviness of frame and muscle, the man moved through the night-darkened alley with the stealth of a cat. Hugging close to the high board fence, he darted silently and quickly from one dense shadow to another. After each such move, when he either held himself erect against the boards, or crouched in the deeper darkness, he stopped for a minute to look about and to listen.

The man's eyes were cold and hard, and looked like the orbs of an animal at bay. From under a low-drawn cap they bored into the gloom trying to spy out any object that might resemble the figure of a man. With equal intentness his ears, in a tangle of bristle-like hair above a bulldog neck, were strained in an effort to catch the faintest sound. When fully satisfied that all was well, he again made one of his quick advances.

The man had been keeping up this method of progress ever since he had come within the neighborhood—always, whenever possible, sticking to an alley. But at last he arrived near his destination. After a longer wait, and a more searching examination of his surroundings than usual, he found a certain gate in the fence, quietly opened it, and eased himself through.

Inside, he felt somewhat easier, but to no extent lessened his stealthiness. Keeping well within the shadow of a property-dividing fence, he at length darted across an open space, and reached the back porch of a ramshackle cottage. He tried the door, but found it locked, as he had expected. Next he crept along the darker side of the house and stopped beneath a window. He could see a light shining from a room farther toward the front, but the window over his head was dark. It was unfastened, and in

a little while he had noiselessly raised the sash and climbed inside, finding himself in a bedroom.

At last he felt fairly safe, and a half-smothered sigh escaped from his heavy-lipped mouth. He easily located the door which he knew led to the lighted room, and, after listening for some time to make sure that there was no conversation to indicate the presence within of more than one person, he opened it a few inches and pressed his face to the crack.

"Lizette!" he whispered loudly.

A frail, fair-haired woman, scarcely more than a girl in appearance, aroused from reading a popular novel, turned quickly, facing the door.

"Steve!" she exclaimed, in startled tones. "What! Why——"

"Sh-h!" hissed the man. "Draw the blinds—tight. And act natural about it, too."

Obediently the woman rose and did as he commanded. Then she turned again toward the slightly open door.

"Something wrong, Steve?" she asked.

"Don't speak so loud. Decidedly wrong," he answered, still speaking from the darkness of the bedroom, and scarcely above a whisper. "But I've got things fixed. They won't get Steve Dirks."

He ended with a low, rumbling chuckle.

"What is it?" inquired the woman, her pale blue eyes showing an awakening of keen fright.

"The dicks got Sandy this afternoon," the man Dirks replied tersely. "The little runt'll squeal, too. Maybe he has already."

"Have we got to run, Steve?" asked the woman meekly.

"I have," answered Dirks. "You'll follow later. I've got it all mapped out. We'll

make a clean getaway, and be absolutely safe afterwards, too."

"Sandy? That means the Burston matter, doesn't it?" came quaveringly from the frail Lizette.

"Yes—and it means hangin' for me, if Sandy comes through. I ought to've choked the little runt like I did Burston. If I had him here, damn him, I'd make him deader than that old money-bags. I'd choke him so nothin' would ever come out o' his mouth again but about a yard of his tongue."

Ending this short tirade, the man unconsciously started to enter the lighted room, but, quickly coming to a realization of the danger of exposing himself in the light, he promptly drew back.

"But I've got it all doped out," he resumed in a low voice. "I'm just as clever as the dicks. If Sandy's squealed they're watchin' the house now. You sit down in that chair again and pretend you're readin', and I'll outline my plans."

"But hadn't we better be actin', 'stead of talkin', Steve?" asked the woman, trembling with excitement.

"Not yet. Do as I say!" he rumbled gruffly.

When Lizette had resumed her seat and taken up her book in extremely nervous hands, Steve Dirks went on:

"I got to cut it short," he began. "It's nearly time the guy was here now."

"What fellow?" asked the woman curiously.

"Just after I got the underground spill that Sandy's been taken, I was in old John's coffee dump, and happened to find just the right fellow for my plan. He's my size and build to a T. The map of his face is also pretty much like mine. He's not a perfect double o' mine, of course, but near enough to do, if we work things right. As soon as I spotted him I got the idea, sidled up to him, and made his acquaintance. Name's Mason. He's up against it, and lookin' for work. Was gettin' a free coffee and wonderin' where he was goin' to sleep. So I asked him out here—told him I'd give him a free bed till he found somethin'. He ought to be here any minute."

"But what's your game?" interrupted Lizette.

"Leave that to me," he stopped her. "Here's what you're to do, and get it straight. You're to leave the lights burnin' and the blinds drawn, and when the guy comes let him in. Then you'll make an excuse and go out to call on one of the neighbors. You're to stay just fifteen minutes; then you come back. Get me?"

"Yes," the woman acknowledged, puzzled.

"All right," the man went on. "When you come in you'll find a man on the floor. He'll be dead—with a knife in him. See?"

He stopped to note how she took it.

"Steve, you don't mean——"

"Yes. He'll be dead. He'll be dressed in my clothes, and I'll have his. And I'll be out of here and gone."

"And me?" asked Lizette, her voice shaky.

"What's the matter with your head—too thick?" he countered savagely. "When you come back from the neighbor's you're to act like the dead man was me—and stick to it all the way through. You'll scream and rush out, call the neighbors, and they'll summon the police. Then you'll come back and cry over the—the departed. Do all the sobbin' you can. The more the better."

"I—I can't, Steve."

"Yes, you can. You've got to, damn it, or I'll get you."

"But, Steve, the neighbors—the police. They won't be fooled," she doubted weakly.

"Sure they will, if you act your part straight," affirmed the crook, with a hollow laugh. "Remember, the neighbors haven't ever seen me except a few times, and then only after dark, or at a distance. And the police haven't got my map on file, and I don't think any of 'em know me by sight. Can't you see how it'll work? They find a dead man of about my size, build and looks on the floor, and you'll say it's me. Why, they can't imagine the dead guy any one else. They're glad it is me, and everything goes off smooth and in a hurry. I'm supposed to be dead, and all the cops and dicks are happy."

He chuckled at the prospect, but quickly resumed speaking:

"But I'll be safely out o' the city, and you can follow me in a few weeks. See? I've got the most of the swag from that Burston case planted away, and we'll have it to make a new start somewhere else. Nobody'll ever know but what Steve Dirks has really croaked."

"But—but who's supposed to've killed you?" questioned the woman anxiously.

"Oh, I didn't tell you that, eh? Why, it's suicide. I——"

"But, Steve, maybe they won't think you killed yourself. Maybe, Steve, they'll think I did it—and arrest me."

"Oh, no, they won't, Lizette," declared her husband. "I'm smarter than that. I've used my head all the way through. Here's a note I've written to leave behind. I'll put it on this dresser in here. I'll clinch things."

He drew from a pocket a rumpled piece of paper, and, holding it to the light that came through the partly open door, he read aloud:

"DEAR LIZETTE:—I'm a goner. The bulls got Sandy, and I'm bein' watched. I can't get away, and if they get me it means the chair. But they're not goin' to get Steve Dirks alive. If they want his carcass—well, let 'em have it. Here it is. Good-by, dear.

STEVE."

He finished the reading with another of his low rumbling chuckles.

"Ain't that rich?" he asked, thoroughly pleased with himself: They'll simply have to believe, after——"

A knock came at the front door.

"A moment, Lizette," he whispered, as the woman sat up nervously. "You let him in. I'll stay here out o' sight. If it's the bulls, I'll beat it out the back window. If it's the guy I think it is, I'll come out. I'll have to chance things a little. See?"

The knock was repeated. Hesitantly and visibly scared, Lizette rose and went to the door. Only her heavily rouged cheeks kept

her from showing a deathly pale face. She turned the knob, opened the door a few inches, and peered out. The person who had rapped started to offer an explanation of why he was there by saying:

"Your husband sent me here."

"Come in," Lizette invited feebly.

A big-framed man, shabbily dressed and otherwise of unkempt appearance, stepped inside, and the woman closed the door behind him. He looked something like Dirks. After a brief scrutiny of the visitor through the crack of the bedroom door, to make sure that everything was all right, Steve stepped briskly into the lighted room, and came forward, his hand extended in greeting.

"Well, Mason, I see you got here all right," he said cheerfully. "Thought maybe you might not come. But you're welcome. I know how it is to be down and out, and you're free to stay here as long as you like."

The men's right hands met in a firm clasp. The left hand of the stranger, however, was in his coat pocket, and stayed there. Dirks observed it, and became a trifle uneasy. Did the hand hold a gun? Could it be possible that he had picked up and invited a detective to his home?

Immediately dismissing the thought as being utterly foolish, he laughed mirthlessly, if a little nervously, and went on bluffly:

"Sure, you're welcome," he repeated. "When you get work—well, then you can pay us, if you feel like it. Pretty hard for a stranger in a city like this, eh?"

He now turned to Lizette, who stood silent and gripped with fear.

"You said you had to go to one of the neighbor's, Lizette," he reminded her. "You can go ahead. I'll take care of our guest."

"All right," she answered, leaving the room.

"Want to wash up a bit, I expect, eh, friend?" Dirks continued, turning again to the stranger. "Well, come right this way."

The rascal was decidedly voluble. He scarcely gave his visitor a chance to speak a word. He did not know at what moment the police, following the probable confession Sandy would make, might come for

him, and he was nervous—*anxious* to get the job finished and make his getaway. He also realized that if there were spies about the house they might have seen the stranger arrive, and, thinking Mason was Dirks himself, make their raid at any minute. That was a little detail he had failed to consider. Strange, he thought, how many small things there were to be looked after.

But continuing to talk incessantly, and having seen his wife hurry out, he proceeded to usher his guest into the darkened bedroom.

"You look like you hadn't had a chance to wash up for about a week, eh, Mason?" he was saying. "Well, here's where you can do it."

And once more he chuckled as he pointed at the basin.

"What's the matter with this infernal light?" he grumbled, and he appeared to be making an effort to operate the switch. He snapped off the light. The next moment he leaped at Mason and gripped his throat in the dark.

There was a sound suggestive of a terrific tussle; then followed the thump of a heavy form striking the floor, and, finally, a throaty laugh.

Steve Dirks realized that there was one more detail that he had overlooked. If it were to appear a case of suicide, the knife must not be removed, and yet he must somehow change clothes with the man. Also, there would be a little blood, although the knife would prevent there being very much of an outward flow. Oh, well, he could manage such trivial things as these, he told himself. He would only change trousers, coat and hat with the man, and perhaps give him a collar and tie, which he did not now possess. And as for any blood which

he might get either on his hands or on the clothes he would take—that, of course, could be removed with a little water.

There was no time to be wasted, and he promptly went to work. First, he undertook to remove the man's coat, which he found to be well thrown back from the chest, and unpierced by the knife. In attempting to remove it, however, he discovered that the man's left hand was still in his coat pocket. He reasoned that that was a little strange. He gave the arm a yank, and out came the hand. It dropped to the floor within the brighter part of the light coming through the partly open door.

"Why, the dirty beggar has a glove on it!" he mumbled in surprise.

Then something caused him to reach down and take the hand in his own.

"Well, what the——" he suddenly exclaimed.

For a long time he stood as one petrified. Every little while he mumbled over to himself:

"They'd know he couldn't have done it. He couldn't choke a man to death. He couldn't have choked the life out of a strong man like Burston. Artificial! He's got a false hand!"

He was finally brought back to a full realization of his immediate position by the sound of voices at the door—his wife's and a man's.

"I tell you he's not here," his wife was declaring hysterically.

"Oh, yes, he is," disputed the voice of the man. "One of our men saw him come home only a little while ago."

"The bulls!" cried Dirks, and made a dash for the back door. He opened it, but run directly into the arms of a couple of policemen.



Powerful Bank Vaults

By HORACE APPLETON

THE great Bank of France, with its hundreds of branches, has begun to equip all its buildings with vaults which are considered impregnable against assault from the skies. Not alone the structures projected but old ones which it has long held are being transformed into veritable strongholds.

Take, for example, one of its buildings in the heart of Paris, once the palace of a Duke of Orleans. The outer shell of this fine fabric still remains. The stately rooms are used for the various purposes of the bank. The grand salon is a counting-room, and the Directors can assemble in what was once a banquet hall. But the new vault is in reality a modern fortress, with a strong suggestion of the medieval. It is a two-story citadel, constructed of heavy masonry and of man-made stone. The roof of the vault is of concrete, four feet in thickness and heavily reinforced by strips and bars of steel and with fine wires. This enormous weight of cement and metal is supported by columns of steel placed on a substantial foundation. It would be merely child's play for a hostile aviator to destroy the ancient roof of the building itself with a bomb or two, but the top of the vault would resist any projectile which could be carried aloft even on the largest modern bombers. The heavy vault is capable of withstanding both fire and bombardment.

On all sides it is defended by water. Its walls are of reinforced concrete, eighteen inches in thickness and treated with a water-proofed material. Four feet from them and extending as high as the top of the first story of the vault is another wall, the space between the two being flooded with water.

Thus, within the bank, unseen from without, there is a stronghold surrounded by a moat. The Middle Ages have come back in this twentieth century. The vault is entered by a bridge which extends from the floor of the old building to its second story, the pathway really a sliding gangway, over which the bank officials or those having business in the vault pass. At night the bridge is slid or hauled back into the bank and the grated portcullis at its entrance closed. After the bridge has receded the vault deserted by every one, its doors on the second story are closed by an electrical device and cannot be opened until the time lock indicates the hour for beginning the business of the next day. As the doors have no handles on the outside and are flush with the sides, the bottom and the tops of the frames in which they are placed, the walls present a smooth, sheer outer face at every point. It is impossible for any human foot or hand to find lodgment on that surface.

The French also are well aware that even in times of peace it is well to have banks discount the possibility of burglars bombing those in the smaller cities and towns. One of these days there may be aviator apaches. In the United States the robber occasionally uses the airplane, and as aviation develops it is conceivable that there will be sky yeggs and aerial cracksmen.

Occasionally the wires brings news of bank robbers and hold-up men who speed into small American towns in high-powered automobiles, present revolvers to the heads of cashiers, and take their departure in a cloud of dust with all the specie they can clean out of the vault.

Mystery Magazine

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

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- 13 "Under a Mask," by Crittenden Marriott.
- 14 "Case 444," by Gladys Hall.
- 15 "After a Million," by Police Captain Howard.
- 16 "Shadowing the Blue Triangle," by C. F. Oursler.
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- 19 "The Double Mystery," by Dr. Harry Enton.
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- 43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by Chas. F. Oursler.
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- 51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
- 52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura R. Montgomery.
- 53 "The Blackjack," by William H. Osborne.
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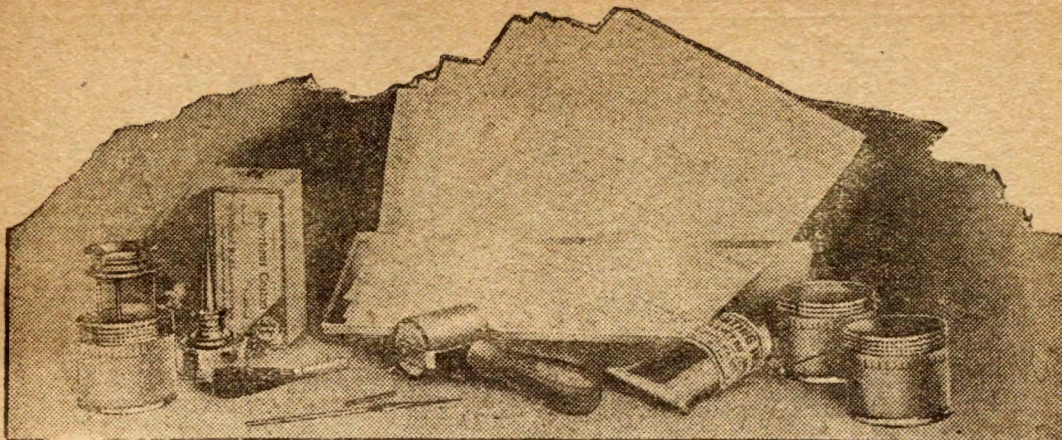
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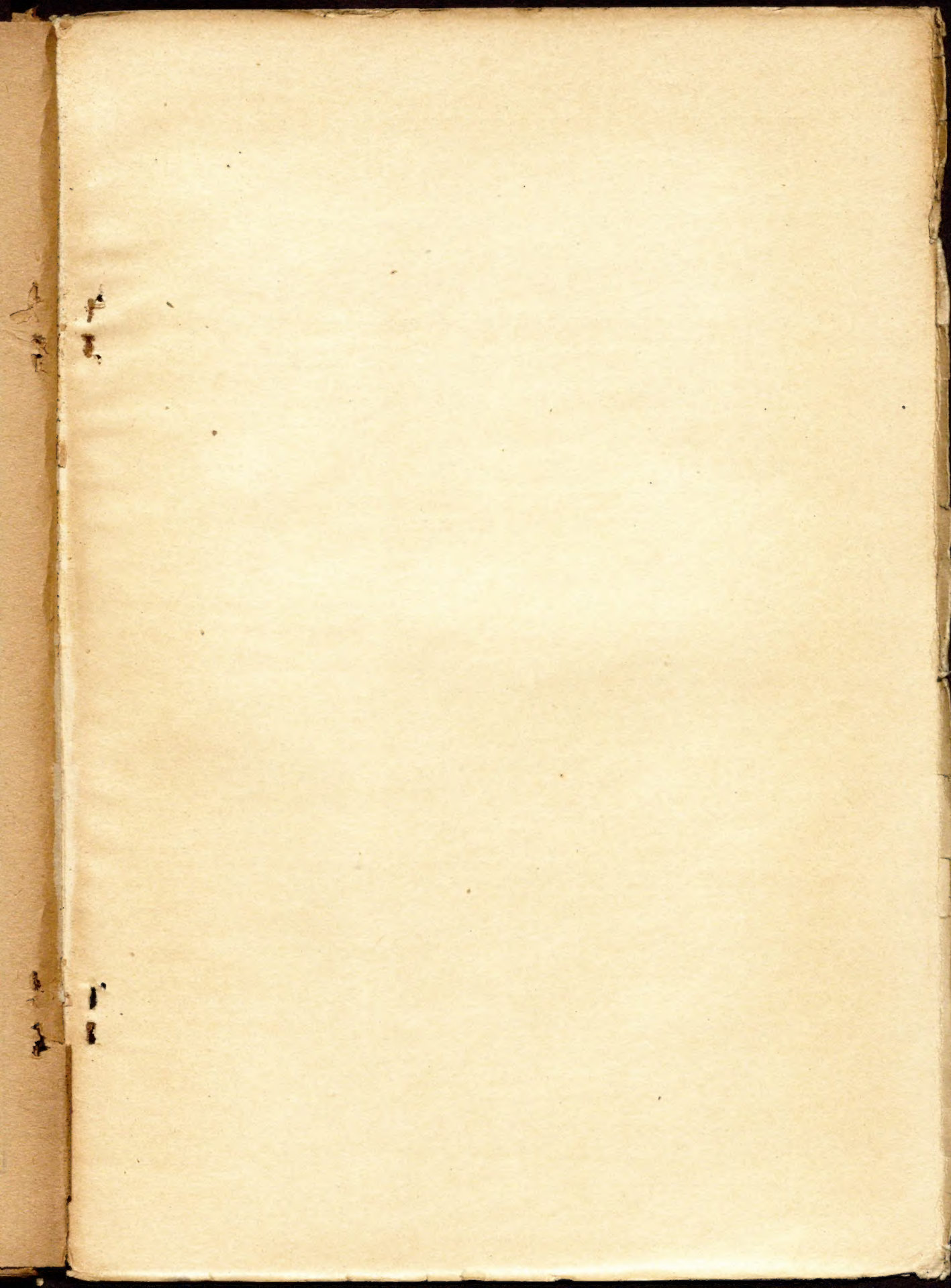
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